Marian Meditations Part III



Marian Meditations

by
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Part III

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Preface

In the third volume of his "Marian Meditations", Father Idelfonso Villa, SDB makes us contemplate the Mother of God from Christ's Resurrection to Her coronation in heaven.

Our Lady's faith is rewarded by the Resurrection of Her divine Son and His visit to Her in the early hours of Easter Sunday. How She must have longed to go with Him to heaven right away, on Ascension Day! But She is the Mother of the Church and She ought to be present at Pentecost with St. Peter and the other apostles. St. John faithfully takes Mary to his own. And while on earth, Our Lady keeps giving way to Her Son and His representatives. But from heaven which She triumphantly enters, body and soul, Christ's power, wisdom and love are given Her to act outrightly as universal Mediatrix of all graces. "To know Mary, you must know Her Heart", Father Villa concludes. "The more you study Her love, the more complete your knowledge of Her will be. A sweet consideration indeed and a sweet devotion too."

Fr. Benoit Wailliez, SSPX

MEDITATION 71

Mary
and the Resurrection of Jesus

1. The Glorious Sepulchre

Through sin death was ushered into the world. All men must die because all men are sinners. Only Jesus and Mary are exempt from this law. And yet God demanded of them to pass through the humiliation of death. But they should not remain in the sepulchre nor could a flesh so clean from every stain undergo corruption and decay.

Moreover, although Christ died, He was not conquered by death. On the contrary, death was changed into an ushering into life, eternal life, that all who die in Christ should never really die but just be taken to the life of immortality. It is on account of this that Jesus, vanquisher of death, was bound to shine forth in the glorious resurrection of His body. He, who had so often

foretold His death, and so often predicted His resurrection, had, through His mastery over death and life, which is proper and exclusive of God, to prove His divinity and hallmark His preaching.

All human grandeur ends in the sepulchre. The power of man, however great, will disappear one day under a tomb-stone bearing the inscription: "*Here lies* ..." But there was one glorious Sepulchre which after Jesus' triumph over death bore another inscription: *Surrexit, non est hic. He has risen. He is not here*. How great then is the glory of Christ in His resurrection. His triumph is unparalleled and unprecedented. He alone could have achieved it. But this glory of Jesus is also Mary's glory. Nothing that refers to Him is foreign to His Mother. She had been associated with Him in Calvary. The pains of Jesus had been suffered by the Mother. It was only just, then, that His triumphs and joys should be Hers and not only Hers but ours also. How should the triumph of the resurrection of Jesus console us! Vain would our faith be had He not risen. His enemies would have definitely reported a victory over Him, over His life and His work. But Christ's res-

urrection gives us the most solid argument of our Faith, the most solid ground for our hope.

We too must die, but also we must rise. Will ours be a holy death? Will our sepulchre be glorious? Will our resurrection be triumphant? Only you can answer these questions. The outcome depends on you. Ask Jesus and Mary that it may be so. Tell them you expect it so through their merits. Protest to them that you want to associate yourself with their sufferings so that one day you may partake of their triumphs.

2. Jesus Appears to His Mother

This is not an article of faith nor is it recorded in the Gospel; nevertheless, it is certain. Both nature and grace demand this meeting of Mother and Son. Can we doubt that Our Blessed Lady with a lively and unshakable faith was expecting this meeting? While the Apostles hesitated about the truth of the Resurrection, Mary felt an infallible certainty that the words of Her Son would be fulfilled. She never went to the sepulchre, for She knew that Jesus was not there. Think now of the holy impatience which especially at the beginning of the third day would overtake the heart of Mary. Minutes would seem an eternity. Her Mother's

heart felt Her Son was about to come and a mother’s heart is not easily mistaken in what appertains to her son. Remember how the mother of Tobias would go daily to the road and scan the horizon awaiting the return of her son. If we knew what is a mother’s heart, and especially the heart of that Mother, then only could we fathom Her longing and impatience to see Her risen Son. It is a pleasant thought to imagine that Her ardent desires and fervent prayers anticipated the hour of the resurrection, just as She had done in the case of the Incarnation and at the wedding at Cana, when She put the clock forward and induced Jesus to manifest Himself to the world by a miracle before the scheduled time.

The happy moment arrives. Visualise Our Lady still sunk in deep sorrow, still in Her solitude, Her eyes red and swollen from the much weeping, and with no more tears to shed. Then all of a sudden there is a flash of divine light. A glorious body brighter than light, clad in garments whiter than snow, appears and then comes the sound of a sweetest familiar voice which calls Her "Mother!" How can language express the meeting of Son and Mother in such a moment? Let your own heart lose itself in this ocean of happiness and of real glory.

Suffering for Him leads to endless enjoyment of Him, whilst the joys and satisfactions of this life are but false and unsatisfying. Here also the rule of love and suffering should be applied, namely: so much love, so much suffering. Equally also, as the suffering is great, so afterwards will be the joy. How great would then be the joy of Our Heavenly Mother since such was Her love for Her Son. If such was Her suffering at His death, how great would Her joy be on seeing Him now glorious, triumphant, risen never more to die. Again, She would go through every wound of His glorious body adoring them shining so splendidly. Let us also, together with Mary, go over His every wound and stop at the wounded Side, in that Heart which is a furnace, a volcano of love. Enter there, set yourself on fire, be consumed in a holy love for God.

3. Effects of That Apparition

a) Her joy was so great and so intense that only by a miracle could Our Lady stand it and yet live. Her joy was a spiritual and divine joy similar to that of Heaven which filled Her soul without ever tiring Her.

b) As a reward for Her fidelity and generosity in sacrifice God granted Her more intimate and profound

compenetration with Her Divine Son. The compenetration was such that it reached the maximum which divinity could attain when giving itself to a creature.

c) She gained a clear knowledge, a more sublime contemplation of the divine work of Redemption and of the greatness of Her Son. Doubtless Jesus then revealed to Her His most sublime secrets, His plans and projects, His ascension into Heaven that was to take place in a few days, the foundation of His Church and the share She would take in it. Finally, the great secrets of Heaven; the many souls who were about to enter.

Let us also rejoice at Christ's glorious triumph and at the joy of our Heavenly Mother. Repeat often the greetings of the Church: *Regina caeli laetare, alleluia*, "Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven". Ask for a share in Her joy, if not now, some day in Heaven; and do not forget that according to St. Paul we must derive from the resurrection of Our Lord a real aversion for the things of the earth that neither can nor should fill our heart; that we must look for the things above; that by living now detached from this one we must long for the next life; that the spirit of faith should render all our actions supernatural

and thus confer on them a value which they cannot have of their own in Heaven.



MEDITATION 72

Mary and the Ascension of Our Lord

1. Prelude to the Ascension

The risen Jesus can no longer remain in this world. He had never quitted Heaven as God, it is true; but as man, He was entitled to the possession of the throne He had earned with His passion and death, with His victory over sin. The Ascension is the complement of His glorification, since it was only through it that He could achieve, on entering Heaven, the plenitude of His glorification. Sin had locked the gates of Heaven; Christ was to open them again. Only to Him was this honour permitted. For that He had come down from Heaven. Now His work is over. The Redemption is a fact; men can look forward to Heaven as their own fatherland. Earth is nothing but a veritable exile. Heaven is our home, our goal, our final rest.

It was already forty days after the resurrection of Christ. Our Lord had many times appeared to strengthen the faith of His disciples and to confirm the reality of His resurrection. How many times during these forty days did He not visit Our Heavenly Mother? He was not living with Her as before His death, but He must have lavished on Her the consolation of paying Her perhaps a daily visit. How such a visit would renew in Her all the joy of the day of His resurrection! How many graces would the Divine Son bestow on His Mother and how many things would He teach Her in those most happy days!

Ask Our Lady for the grace of knowing how to visit Her, how to keep Her company; how to comfort Her. Beg Her to teach you those things She knows would be useful to you. Ask Her to give you a share of the graces which Her Son lavished on Her during those happy days.

2. The Ascension

Jesus appears to His apostles and disciples for the last time and leads them to the Mount of Olives. There His passion started. From there He will one day judge the world. There also He wanted His ascension to take place. What a world of recollections

would that place bring to the minds of all! What thoughts would crowd the soul of Mary! What a mighty change, what a contrast between what happened forty days before and what was taking place now under Her eyes. If those stones, once witnesses of His agony and of His sweating of blood, could speak! If those olive trees which watched His capture could talk, what would they say!

In your struggles and sorrows do not forget this. All passes; all quickly fades away. Very often that which was the cause of our sorrow becomes now the root of our joy and will certainly in Heaven be the instrument of our victory, our glory, and our happiness. Then at a certain moment, in the presence of all His disciples and of Our Heavenly Mother from whom He would especially take leave and to whom He would more clearly than to the rest show the fitness of His returning to Heaven, Jesus began to be transfigured. His face shone like a sun. His eyes glowed brightly with a loving light. His hands rose slowly to bless them and from His wounds, so beautiful and glorious, sprung the sweetest perfume which comforted the heart of the faithful. All would take leave of Him, kissing the wounds of His hands and feet. Our Blessed Lady would come forward

and kiss for the last time the wounds of His side and then, gently and slowly, with a movement nearly imperceptible at the beginning, with His eyes raised to His Father Who was calling Him, Christ began to rise from the earth and to ascend into Heaven.

See the Apostles ecstatically watching that sight. They do not seem to know how it is going to end. But see Our Heavenly Mother following Her Son with Her eyes. Then a shining cloud wraps Him, and the Apostles can see Him no longer. But for Mary there are no clouds. Her maternal eyes can pierce whatever interposes itself between Jesus and Herself. She sees the triumphant entry of Her Son into Heaven, accompanied by the souls of the just which He had just freed from Limbo. She would hear the triumphant canticles of the angelic hosts. Rejoice in this victory by Jesus, in which also Mary partakes, and beg of Her that through Her intercession and through the merits of Her Son you may also one day partake of the same joy in Heaven.

3. The Effects of the Ascension

a) *In Our Lady.* Great joy, an immense satisfaction, such as only She, the Mother of the Saviour, could experience. A greater love for God on seeing

the loving work of Redemption completed. How thankful would She feel towards God. But on the other side what sadness to find Herself deprived of Jesus! She would no longer live with Him. She would no longer receive His visits. How heavy was Her life going to be. What a long and unbearable exile! And this separation had to last for years and years. Always without that Son for whom She had so tenderly existed. Only a lover can appreciate this sacrifice of the Heavenly Mother. But She accepted it generously as She had once done in the Temple, as She had once done in Calvary. Once more thank Our Lady for this sacrifice made out of love for us.

b) *In the Apostles.* The effects on them were a great admiration and an immense joy. They did not grow tired of looking up to Heaven. This gave them joy and strength. How many times during their labours and sufferings would they look up to Heaven again and be comforted. Moreover, their faith grew in a great manner on seeing the glorious crowning of the life and death of their Master. They now realised at last what kind of kingdom was His and where it was. Their hope was equally strengthened through the promise of the sending

of the Holy Ghost, and through the word pledged by Jesus of taking also them to that glory where He was going. Finally, their charity was also enlarged. Their love for their Master grew in their hearts. They now realized how much Jesus had loved them.

c) *Within Us.* Ask Our Lady that something similar may happen in your heart. That your faith may be strengthened. That you may grow in the hope of Heaven, in the charity and love of Jesus. Ask Her to look up to Heaven as the Apostles did, above all in the hardships of life. Ask Her help to be detached from every earthly thing that you may place your heart only in God and in your heavenly homeland. This will spur you towards labour, towards sacrifice, towards exactness in the fulfilment of your duties. It will fill you with that holy joy of which À Kempis spoke: *Those who think of, and hope in, Heaven cannot on this earth have one single moment of real sadness.*



MEDITATION 73

Mary and the Descent of the Holy Ghost

1. Preparation

The Apostles and the Disciples betook themselves to the supper room in order to prepare themselves there together with the Holy Mother for the coming of the Holy Ghost. Examine their preparation:

a) First, they retire because it is in solitude and retirement that God communicates Himself to souls. God does not like to speak in the midst of the turmoil of the world. His Spirit is not captured in dissipation nor then can His voice be clearly heard. Loving the solitude must not be merely external, but chiefly internal by the banishing of those thoughts, businesses, impressions and occupations which distract us. Inquire if it is not on account of

this that your prayer is so faulty and that you derive so little profit for your soul. Do you master the art of external and internal retirement? Do you know how to bring silence into your soul casting out all those things that are foreign to prayer?

b) *They gathered together to pray.* Prayer is the solution of every problem. Our Lord never acted without prayer. He prayed in the supper room, in the Garden, on the Cross. The Angel of the Annunciation found Mary at prayer. The Apostles under the leadership of Mary betook themselves to prayer. You are also daily invited to prayer. How do you respond? Are you a man of prayer? Have you recourse to it when you need light, consolation and strength?

c) *In the company of Mary.* How lucky were those Apostles since they could pray together with Mary. She led the prayer; She set the example of fervour. By merely looking at Her, all tiredness, all lukewarmness, all distractions would certainly vanish. But could you not do the same if you wished? How is it that you do not pray with Mary, looking to Her, learning if at the beginning, at the middle, at the conclusion of your prayer you keep Mary company.

Learn also how to have a great esteem for prayer in common; it is very pleasing to God. It is highly fruitful.

d) Finally, remark their perseverance. The Holy Ghost did not come down on them until after ten days of constant prayer. Instead, how easily we grow tired of prayer! We want to get everything at once. If not, we grow discouraged. Ask Our Lady to teach you how to be constant, not just for one day or two, but let your prayer always be fervent and so it will be efficacious and sanctifying.

2. The Coming

Once they were thus prepared, the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Day came in the shape of tongues of fire. Go into the supper room and there witness the astonishment and fear of the Apostles on hearing the violent hurricane, feeling that the whole house was shaking as though it was falling to pieces, as they received the mysterious tongues of fire which alighted on everyone of them. Try to understand their great joy on feeling themselves filled with the Holy Ghost, with His gifts and graces, and especially with the burning love which is the Holy Ghost.

What would Our Lady feel? She was the first to understand the arrival of the Holy Ghost. Far from being frightened by those violent signs which accompanied His coming, She retired into the innermost recesses of Her soul in order to receive Him the better. How pleased would the Holy Ghost be on finding a soul so well prepared as that of Mary. The Holy Ghost had previously granted Her the fullness of His grace. What else could He do in Her on that day? He would miraculously increase Her capacity. He would dilate the expanse of Her soul. He would still more enlarge Her heart in order to have the satisfaction of filling it yet more with new graces, new privileges, with new and more fervent love.

Kneel before our dear Mother and admire the immense greatness bordering on the infinity of God with which you see Her clad on receiving the Holy Ghost. See Her again today more resplendent, pure and holy, and, if we can say so, more full of the love of God and of men. Were the Archangel to appear to Her again He would be dumbfounded. He would not be able to find in his angelic language suitable expressions to greet Her. Let your heart exult with joy. Ask Our Blessed Lady a small share of all that She is, all that She possesses.

3. The Effects

a) *All were filled with the Holy Ghost.* How generously is that same gift of God lavished upon us. Altissimi donum Dei! What a transformation He works in souls! Look how the Apostles instantly change into other men. A few days ago they cowardly fled; or, like St. Peter, denied Christ; or, like the disciples of Emmaus, doubted the words of the Master; or, like St. Thomas, would not believe. But now no longer cowards they have become courageous and brave; from weak and frightened they are strong and unconquerable; from ignorant and rough into docile and wise; from petty and jealous, preoccupied about the first places of honour, into hearts burning with ardent Charity. What an extraordinary, a miraculous transformation!

b) *And they began to speak.* That is to say, to preach, to labour for souls, to give them a share of the same gift they themselves had just received. It is characteristic of the charity of the Holy Ghost to spread good to all. Note, however, that in order that the activity may be fruitful, it must be inspired and directed by the Holy Ghost.

c) *They preached the great things of God.* These souls so filled with God could not speak of anything else. Of what would the Apostles speak once they were set on fire and inspired by the Holy Ghost? And do you also like to speak of the things of God? You can thereby gauge the measure of the Spirit of God within you. The spirit of the world leads you to talk of lowly and earthly things. The spirit of self-love induces us to talk only of ourselves. The Spirit of the Lord leads us to behave as the Apostles did.

4. The Holy Ghost within Us

Do not forget that at Baptism you also received the Holy Ghost. It was He who made you a child of God. You received Him in Confirmation where He strengthened you in your faith and took you under His protection. By means of sanctifying grace you constantly receive Him in all the sacraments through the effusion of the divine life. Do not forget that the Holy Ghost dwells in souls as in His living temple and therefore you have Him close in your very heart. It is He who sustains, helps, enlightens and leads you along the way of sanctity.

Thank Him for His inexhaustible love which never tires of you or of your ingratitude. Promise

that you will labour with more effort and will co-operate with more interest with the work of grace. Entrust this task to Our Heavenly Mother that She may prepare your heart as She did with the hearts of the apostles. She will render fruitful and abiding the coming of the Holy Ghost into your soul.



MEDITATION 74

Mary's Last Years

We do not know for certain but it is easy to guess how Our Heavenly Mother passed the last years of Her life. First it must have been a life of prayer. The whole life of Our Lady was a life of prayer since She never lost sight of the presence of God either before or after the Incarnation. However, towards the end of Her life this prayer was bound to be even more intense. How could She spend one single moment without thinking of Her beloved Son? Would She not think of Him constantly? Would She not incessantly recall His words, His miracles, His preaching, His passion and death, His resurrection and ascension, His love for men?

The Gospel says that Mary used to keep whatever Jesus said even from childhood deep in Her heart. And apart alone She would meditate on it. Could She now live without this meditation, She

who only lived of Jesus and for Jesus? On the other hand Her duties as Mother were already terminated. Her household work no longer occupied Her for She was lovingly taken care of in the house of St. John. Consequently, all Her time would be spent conversing with Her Son, Her God. It is natural to suppose that often, perhaps daily, She would visit the places sanctified by the one-time presence of Her Son. Accompany Her on these visits and see Her enter the Garden of Olives, to spend there a long while remembering the agony of Jesus. See Her climb Mount Calvary, one by one going over the stations of the cross, prostrating Herself at the place of the crucifixion, kissing the tombstone of the Holy Sepulchre and returning once more through that street of sorrows as She did on the day of Her solitude.

Ask Our Lady to accompany you; especially when you make the stations of the cross or meditate on the passion. How devout and loving would the prayer of this Virgin be!

1. Life of Fervour

There is no sanctity without fervour. How great, then, was the fervour of Mary since Her sanctity

was so high. Can you even imagine that She could do anything carelessly, ungracefully, distractedly, only through compulsion? She is always endeavouring to serve God as a real handmaid, always better and always more; with an ever increasing charity, uprightness of intention, interest.

On the road to sanctity, to stop is to go back. Imagine, then, how great must have been the growth in virtue of that heavenly Lady. While thinking of this be ashamed of yourself in Her presence. She, always pure, always holy, always full of grace, strives nevertheless ceaselessly after the better, never stopping while we — what are we doing? Let our heart give the answer.

2. Eucharistic Life

Her life during those years must have been an intense Eucharistic life. Who could ever receive Holy Communion with Her fervour? If Holy Communion is the most intimate union of the soul with God, how fervent would Her Communions be! It would seem to Her that the Incarnation was renewed in every Holy Communion. On receiving Jesus She would again feel the effective real and true presence of Her Son. Not a day would

pass without Her receiving Our Lord. For Her Holy Communion would be the central action of every day. The whole day would seem too short for Her preparation and thanksgiving. If the saints say that one Holy Communion would suffice to make a saint, what effects would it have on the soul of Our Lady? In many souls the effects of Holy Communion are conspicuous.

Try then to guess what Holy Communion means for Mary. You should also centre your life around the Holy Eucharist. Holy Communion and visits to the Blessed Sacrament must be the most important acts of your life. Remember Mary, imitate Her, pray to Her, entreat Her not to abandon you and ask Her to teach you how to receive Holy Communion well.

3. Life of Sacrifice

a) In obedience, not only to the evangelical laws but also to whatever St. Peter and the apostles ordered for the welfare of the Church. She never asked for an exception, She never believed Herself exempt from any rule. She was the first to obey and submit Herself. She saw the representatives of God in those vested with authority. And in their commands She saw the will of God.

b) *In Poverty.* She lived on alms as Her Son had done. She was satisfied with whatever distributions the apostles made to the widows and the other poor amongst the faithful. She would never consent to any distinction whatever being made on Her behalf. Many believe that Mary so loved that poverty, which She had seen so fervently and lovingly practised by Her Son, that She was the first to take the vow of poverty, becoming thereby the model of so many souls who in Her footsteps would eventually choose the way of poverty as an excellent means of sanctification.

c) *In Mortification.* As St. Ambrose says Her temperance and abstinence were admirable and even heavenly. She would eat in the most simple and ordinary manner. She would very often practise fasts and penances. Equally She would rest only for the minimum time necessary to sustain life. She would spend the greater part of the night in vigil and devote Herself to prayer. Compare your life with Hers and realise how you are not entitled to boast of your little sacrifices.

4. A Most Pure and Virginal Life

She, ever a Virgin, towards the end of Her life showed a greater love for the flower of virginity with the perfumed memory of Her virtues. She wanted, it would seem, to leave a legacy for our imitation. The one whom the Church in that liturgical anthem "Holy and Immaculate Virginity, we do not know with what human words we could praise thee worthily" greets as virginity itself is Our Mother, the Virgin of virgins. Imitate that external modesty; eagerly conceal at the bottom of your soul the treasure of chastity and purity.

5. Life of Love and Charity Towards Souls

She would constantly pray for all and especially for sinners. Would not those prayers be the cause of the first miraculous conversions brought about by the apostles? How She would pray for the persecutors. How She would pray for Saul, so as to transform him into St. Paul. Moreover, that love for souls used to shine forth by helping all with Her words, teaching them the mysteries of the faith that She knew so well, encouraging the faithful, especially by Her example. The example of Her life was a beautiful sermon. Would that you yourself were

like Her. Pray to Our Heavenly Mother to obtain for you the grace of imitating in some way Her holy, pure and immaculate life.



MEDITATION 75

The Death of Mary

1. The Reality of Her Death

Mary, although not bound by the law of death, truly died. Death being the punishment of sin, in Mary's case it could not be so for She had not contracted even original sin, neither had any actual sin or the slightest stain or the most insignificant imperfection ever soiled Her. However, God wanted Her to die that She should in this manner imitate Her Son Who also underwent death; that She might have Her merits increased by going through that terrible and hateful humiliation, never deserved by Her; and above all that Her death might be an example and consolation for us at the moment of our death.

It was quite fitting that Jesus should die in order to give an abundance of satisfaction for us. Conquer the death of sin through His own death. Show us

that He was truly man, equal to us, capable of suffering, of feeling, of dying like the rest of us all, and experience in Himself the anguish of that hour so as to be an admirable example of fortitude and patience for us in our agony. If it was then so fitting for Christ to die, would it not also be so for His Mother? If the Redeemer dies, should not the Co-redemptrix also die?

Faced with this reality of the death of Mary, think of the reality of your own death. You must certainly die, because if death entered the world through sin, your sins have deserved death a thousand times. With your death you must atone for your offences against God.

2. Death of Love

Mary was dying through love throughout Her life. Love had been Her fever. St. Theresa of Jesus felt like dying because she could not actually die. Blessed Imelda died in an ecstasy. So many other saints, being unable to stand the fire of love which consumed them, actually died of it. What then happened in the heart of Mary? The astonishing thing is that She could still live. A continuous miracle was needed; else She must long ago have died of love.

Have you ever seen a tree heavily laden with fruit, barely able to hold its branches aloft? Such was the case with Our Heavenly Mother. She was a fruit-laden tree. Her soul could hardly bear the weight of so much grace whose fullness She had from the first instant of Her life. And that precious weight went on increasing without ceasing for one single moment. How could that body, so pure, holy and immaculate, contain that soul, which from Her conception was being pulled with an irresistible strength towards Heaven?

Moreover, how powerful would that attraction be with which the soul of Our Mother gravitated towards Jesus! How strong would the longing be with which that most white dove was urged to fly to Him! Those words of the psalm: *Alas! How has my exile been lengthened, how long have I been living with the dwellers of Cedar. How long has my soul been a pilgrim in this life,* undoubtedly were written of Her. At times with more ardour than David She would exclaim: *Oh God, my whole soul longs for thee, as a deer for running water. My whole soul thirsts for God, the living God. Shall I never again make my pilgrimage into God's presence?* Finally, with the angels, She would utter those words of

the "Song of Songs": *I charge you maidens of the Heavenly Jerusalem; if you find my Beloved, tell him that I pine away with love.* Every moment would that volcano burning within Her soul increase until it consumed and devoured Her completely. Oh, that you could love God in this manner, and be consumed by His love!

3. A Sweet Agony

God could not any more resist these loving longings and finally resolved to acquiesce. According to a tradition, the Lord sent the Archangel Gabriel with this sweet message: "Hail Mary, Thou full of grace today much more than on the day of the Annunciation! The Lord has yielded to thy longing and sends me to inform Thee to make ready to quit the earth, since Thou art going to be crowned in Heaven. Make haste, then, because all the angels are longing for the day when they will keep Thee in their company their Queen and Mistress." Listen again to the answer of this most humble Virgin on hearing this embassy. Again She prostrates Herself on the ground and repeats: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to Thy word!"

The beloved disciple has become aware that Mary is about to depart for heaven. He cannot stand the thought of it. How can he live if, used as he was to that maternal glance, to that tender fondling, they snatched that jewel from him? How will he be able to survive? How great will be his sorrow! He had received Mary in legacy a cherished treasure on Calvary! He had eagerly kept it. He had looked after Her with so much care; and now death is going to snatch it all from him!

The sorrow of all the other apostles and disciples, of all the Christians and especially those holy, pious women in whose company Our Lady had been living would be similar. How sad and desolate must have been that departure for them all! But for Mary it was so sweet; and She would certainly try to ease the separation by telling those around Her: "Do not weep. It is good for you that I go in order to look after you from Heaven. I shall never fail you until the end of time." This promise of Our Lady is most consoling to us. How true it is that Our Lady is always with us! The Church is not sad, nor does she don funeral apparel on the anniversary of Mary's death. Rather does she array herself in festive garments. *The death of saints is precious*, says the

Holy Scripture. What then could be the said of the death of Mary? St. John Damascene says that Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself came to give Her Her last Communion and said to Her: "Receive, O Lady and Mother of mine from My own hands the Body that you gave me, the One shaped in Your most pure womb." And Our Lady answered: "My Son, into Thy hands I entrust my soul!" And then the Lord bidding that most holy soul come out from that holy body, took it in His Hands exclaiming: "Come now, My Beautiful One, My Dove, come because the winter is over in this vale of tears. Come from the Lebanon and You will be crowned."

So Mary died in the only way She could, of love. St. Francis de Sales says: *if only we could have a similar death!* Do not forget that death is just a reflection of our life. Do you want to die like Mary? Do you live like Her? Neither help nor protection will ever be wanting from Her. So let there not be wanting on your side that constant and true devotion to Mary which will ensure you a holy and sweet death. Ask that grace daily from your Beloved Mother.

MEDITATION 76

The Burial and Resurrection of Mary

1. The Burial

Mary's triumph did not finish with Her holy and enviable death. Similar to Her Son in all, She had also to be similar to Him in the glory of the sepulchre and in the triumph of Her resurrection. Man on dying falls conquered by the inexorable power of death which brings him down to earth to be changed in a sepulchre into corruption and dust. That is why to us the sepulchre appears so cold, so sad, so humiliating. But it was not so for Mary. Her sepulchre had nothing repulsive about it. It is not uncommon in the presence of the dead bodies of those persons who have died in the odour of sanctity, to feel comfortable and even experience a mysterious attraction. What then would be experienced in the presence of Mary's body, lifeless, it is true, but ever virgin, ever immaculate.

Try to picture the scene which took place at Her burial. How sorrowful it would be for all to see those most sweet eyes closed. To see those blessed lips which uttered so many words of consolation sealed dumb. To see motionless those virginal hands, which had lavished so many graces and blessings. But at the same time how consoling, how comforting, how delightful it was for all to contemplate that placid calm, that supernatural resplendence of that body, to perceive the perfume exhaled from it; a scent which perfumed all the surroundings.

See the apostles and all those present bending reverently to kiss those hands and those feet, taking leave, accompanying Her to the place of burial, lighting torches, burning perfumes, showering flowers whilst the angels joined in with their celestial canticles; hymns which sounded not as mourning or wailing, but as triumphant songs. Laid like Her Son in a new sepulchre, the apostles left and the angels of heaven remained there standing on guard. Stay you also there. Accompany that holy body. Join the choirs of angels and sing with them the praises of your Mother. Ask that one day you with the angels may sing the same praises in Heaven.

2. The Incorruption of Her Immaculate Body

The victory of Mary over death demanded the incorruption of the sepulchre. This singular grace having been granted by God to many bodies of saints, how could it be denied to Her? Says St. John Damascene rightly: "How could the corruption of death enter that body from which life had sprung?" It has been said that Mary is the beginning of Christ. How then could He, who was already in Heaven seated at the right hand of His Father, surrounded by the majesty of His divine glory, permit that that body, which was something of His own, should be invaded by the corruption of the sepulchre?

That corruption of our body has its raison d'être in sin. Sin is the seed of corruption. Consequently, Mary, conceived without original sin, preserved from every stain, even from the shadow of sin, could not undergo the slightest corruption. How could the virginal purity of Her immaculate body give way to that repulsive decay? Would not that body which was the first to have vowed virginity to God deserve Heaven on this earth as a very special reward? The Ark of the Covenant was made of incorruptible timber and yet this was only a figure of the reality foreshadowed by it: the soul and the incorruptible body of Mary. Mary

was the real Ark of the New Covenant. Beg of Our Lady to be given a share of this incorruptibility from sin which is the one that matters.

3. The Resurrection

Incorruption was still too little for the definitive triumph of Our Heavenly Mother. The real conclusion could be nothing less than a new life in a glorious resurrection, a new immortality communicated by Her soul to Her body, Thus, constituting a perfectly Christ-like life which would never know death. It has been said that Mary is the beginning of Christ, therefore it is impossible to separate the Mother from Her Son. Hence it follows as a natural consequence that Christ must put an end to that state of things which, so to say, hindered the relations between Jesus and Mary. They were separated from each other and so it was imperative that Mary should join Him as soon as possible. Jesus and Mary must meet again in Heaven since they had lived so closely united here on earth.

Moreover, the body of Our Heavenly Mother was not an occasion of sin for Her as ours is. It knew no disorderly passions, it experienced no rebellion against the spirit, all was harmonious. It was an

orderly and perfect ensemble where the body was ever in obedience to the soul of Mary. Her most pure flesh was always in perfect submission to that divinised spirit of Mary. It was then just that they should not be estranged from each other; but rather, as a reward of that submission, it was fitting that God should join them together so that they should keep on serving and praising God in their continued union and harmony.

Imagine, then, the happy instant in which through the virtue and omnipotence of Her divine Son the body of Our Lady received from Her soul a new life, and rose glorious and immortal, scoring a victory over the sepulchre. How joyful would that most holy body appear on finding itself inseparably united to that most holy soul! How great would its beauty be if Mary was always even in Her earthly life so beautiful! Contemplate the wonder of the apostles when early in the morning they went to visit the sepulchre and found there only a sweet scent left behind by the risen body.

How this would recall the remembrance of the resurrection of Christ! How they would rejoice on seeing that also Christ's Mother had risen! Offer your congratulations to the divine Son and to His

Mother; beg again for a share in that inseparable and eternal union. Promise that you will never be torn from them, neither by sufferings nor by joys, neither in struggle nor in triumph.



MEDITATION 77

Her Glorious Assumption

1. The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption

These two mysteries are closely linked together. The Church underlines both by keeping them as feasts of obligation even after having suppressed other feasts of Our Lady. The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption mark the beginning and the end of Mary's life on earth. These two extremes are so linked together that each explains the need for the other. If Mary is immaculate She cannot remain in the sepulchre; She must necessarily rise to Heaven. Mary's Immaculate Conception is a privilege. It is an exception to that general rule which we all have to follow. That is why it might be said that Mary rather than dying merely shed off mortality. Even in Her conception She was never a slave of sin and therefore She was immaculate.

She would never be the slave of death and therefore She was taken body and soul into heaven. The Assumption of Our Heavenly Mother is the necessary complement of Her Immaculate Conception.

2. The Truth of the Assumption

The Church has already pronounced herself about its truth, for the Assumption is now a dogma of our Faith. But even before the definition pronounced by Pius XII on that glorious first of November 1950, to oppose it, according to Suarez, would have been to fall into theological error. It would have been rash opposition to the unanimous feeling of the universal Church, a feeling based on one of the most ancient and most constant traditions of the Holy Fathers. The Church celebrates the Assumption of Our Lady as one of Her greatest festivities and prepares for it with fasting and abstinence. The Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven has a direct connection with His passion. In a parallel manner, if the painful passion of Our Lord had its culmination in the glory of His ascension, so Mary, Who always kept so closely united to Her Son on Calvary, crowns Her passion with the victory of Her assumption. All of us one day will

rise and by the grace of God we shall be taken into Heaven. But is it not fit and just that Mary should precede us and as a Mother should prepare a home for Her children in Heaven? Is She not our captain? Then She must go at the head of Her army. She was the first in grace. She was the first in sanctity, in virginity. Hence it is just that She be also the first in the Resurrection and Ascension.

Were it otherwise, Our Lord could be said to have been unfair to His Mother by refusing an honour that was granted to so many other saints. Indeed, where is the body of Mary, where are Her relics, where is Her magnificent sepulchre, the precious gems, the rich urn which holds Her sacred remains? Nothing of the kind exists. Nor can they exist for our beloved Mother was taken to Heaven, body and soul. Thank God for this. Congratulate Our Blessed Lady, since through Her Assumption She occupies the place befitting Her in the Kingdom of God.

3. The Glory of the Assumption

For the last time contemplate that tomb from where a burst of light is going to spring, a life victorious over death. During the three days that Her immaculate body remained in the tomb, it was

guarded by angels sent by God; a body-guard to Her who was shortly to be crowned as their Queen. Hearken to the heavenly strains incessantly intoned by the angels in honour of that virginal body. Listen to the appeals by which they would exert a sweet violence on God, constantly repeating those words of the psalm that seem to have been written for that occasion: *Rise, Lord, and hasten to Thy resting place. Thou and Thy ark of sanctity. Rise to the heights of that throne; sit at the right of Thy Father, since this is the place that belongs to Thee. But take along with Thee that holy Ark of the Covenant where you were once contained, where the infinite treasure of Thy sanctity was deposited. Glorify already that holy flesh, that most pure blood that provided the elements of that sacred body which furnished Thee the matter to be offered to Thy Father, the Host of atonement and sanctification for the sins of the whole world.*

And in fact, that most happy moment arrived in which God fulfilled these longings of the heavens and by His order the soul of Mary came to join Her body again. Then the body, quickened by the life of immortality, starts to rise to heaven, as naturally, says the Church, as the scented smoke of the incense rises to the sky.

Countless legions of angels climb down from heaven to take part in Mary's triumphant entry. Their victorious music, their hymns of glory fill the air with harmony. Their joy is unparalleled. God today has enhanced their glory and increased their happiness. Today all of them shine with a new life; and in their midst, as the moon among the stars, the most pure beauty of the Mother of God shines forth with extraordinary splendour. Her Son Who personally came down to receive Her and thus enhance Her triumph takes Her by the hand. Slowly She rises from this earth, pierces the clouds and arrives at the gates of Heaven where all the angels, impatiently awaiting Her arrival have come to welcome the magnificent procession.

So ends the scene on this earth, so begins the glory of heaven. If you could pack into your imagination all the greatest and most splendid things imaginable, all would be nothing in comparison with that sublime and magnificent reality. Measure yourself in all your littleness and misery before the greatness of your Mother and rise with Her far above the things of this earth. In a special manner try to imitate Her humility so that you too with Her may one day be escorted to, and glorified in, the heavenly life.

MEDITATION 78

Mary's Coronation in Heaven

1. The Entry into Heaven

Who from earth below could have the faintest picture of the splendid entry of Our Lady into Heaven? Think of Judith returning to Bethulia, after she had cut off Holophernes' head, thereby freeing her country, and the people running triumphantly to meet her, acclaiming her the saviour of the town. They light torches in token of joy. They bless her exclaiming: Blessed art thou by the Lord that made you so great through this achievement. Never will praises be wanting in your honour. This is the figure. Now for Judith substitute Mary, heaven for Bethulia, for those inhabitants you have the angels, for all those shouts of joy and acclamations the hosannas of the holy spirits and you will realise the magnificence of that entry.

Recall what happened at the Ascension of Our Lord and see what happens now. *Open your gates!* the accompanying angels exclaim. *Open your gates, oh princes of the glory. Rise, eternal gates and make way for the queen of the Heavens.* Instantly the gates are flung open and with indescribable pomp and majesty the new Empress enters the heavenly court. The courtiers of the heavens hasten to contemplate their new Queen and on seeing Her so beautiful ask each other: *Who is this one who from the desert of the world, from that wilderness of thorns and thistles, rises now to these heights, not upheld by the hands of the angels but resting on the arms of God Himself? And other angels answer: She is the Mother of Our God and of Our King, the holy of holies, the most pure, the Immaculate, the most beautiful masterpiece of the whole creation, She who is to be crowned as Our Queen.*

Then taking up the words of the Archangel, Gabriel, they would in unison make the heavens shake with enthusiasm and tenderness, repeating: *Hail, Thou full of grace, welcome be to this glory, with Thy beauty and sanctity. Thou art always with God and the Lord is always with Thee. Thou are blessed amongst all creatures and art about to sit on the highest throne, the closest possible to God.*

Join the angels, rejoice with them, or rather more than them because whereas they call Her Queen, you may call Her Mother. Be filled with holy pride on seeing your Mother. More splendid than the dawn, more beautiful than the moon, more shining than the sun, formidable like an army in battle array, acclaimed by all the hierarchies and angelic choirs as She takes possession of Her glory.

2. The Coronation

All this, sublime though it be, was after all only the entrance. The apotheosis was reached when God, coming to meet Mary, invited Her to sit on the throne that belonged to Her because She is the Mother of God. She must be crowned as a Queen. Come and be crowned, the Almighty tells Her. Come and be crowned with the crown that was prepared for you from eternity — Recollect those words of St. Paul when speaking of Heaven: *No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no man has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him*. How then could we imagine what God had prepared for the one who from the first instant of Her conception loved Him more than all the saints and angels together? The Church gives an answer to this when she sings: *She has been exalted above*

all the choirs of angels, so that there is no throne higher than Hers. She is a hierarchy by Herself, and indeed, the greatest, the most sublime of all, the one who for the whole of eternity gives God the greatest glory.

God grants the reward according to merit. Its glory is in proportion to the degree of the sanctity of the soul. Plunge into this fathomless sea which is truly immense, namely, the unlimited wealth of the graces and merits of Our Heavenly Mother. Then you will be able to build up some idea of the immensity of Her glory in Heaven. See Her advance, modest and recollected, led by the hand of God, to ascend the steps of His throne, sit by His side, and be there crowned by the Father with the crown of power, by the Son with the crown of wisdom, by the Holy Spirit with the crown of love. She is crowned also for the superangelic purity of Her Heart, of Her spirit and of Her immaculate body; for Her most perfect obedience; for Her most profound humility as well as for Her most ardent love which made Her live and die from love of God.

3. Her Homage

So crowned, Our Lady receives the homage of all the dwellers of Heaven. The Father extols Her as

His well-beloved daughter and then Mary adores Him. The Son embraces His Mother and then Mary corresponds with loving tenderness. The Holy Spirit takes possession of His most pure spouse and Mary in return gives all the love of Her heart. Then the Virgins come and greet Her as the Virgin of Virgins. The Martyrs acclaim Her as their leader Who at the foot of the Cross set the standard of suffering and martyrdom.

The Prophets acknowledge Her as the prodigious woman pre-announced by them. The Patriarchs find in Her the goal of all their hopes and holy impatience. The Angels proclaim Her their Queen and Mistress. Adam and Eve also approach and bless Her for having succeeded in satisfying for their sin so perfectly, since indeed, it was thanks to Her that their children of wrath had become children of benediction. And then St. Elizabeth and Her beloved parents Joachim and Anne followed by St. Joseph Her happy spouse all gather round Her throne.

See that most humble Virgin now so exalted and extolled. Recall the Magnificat, Her canticle of thanksgiving to Almighty God. How well understood now are those words: *Because He has looked graciously upon the lowliness of His handmaid. Because*

He who is mighty has wrought for me His wonders. Behold, from this day forward, all generations will count me blessed.

Do not, however, rest content with admiring this magnificent triumph. Do not stop at singing Her power and grandeur. Take this opportunity and ask your Mother to teach you, after Her example, the way of profound humility. Mary so crowned in Heaven is the embodiment, the exact fulfilment of those words of Our Lord: *Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*



MEDITATION 79

The Threefold Crown — Power

Mary was crowned with the three-fold crown of Power, Wisdom and Love. Let us pause to consider the beauty and grandeur of this three-fold crown.

1. God's Omnipotence

Consider, first, the infinite power of God. Rightly do we call Him All-powerful. He can do all; and nothing can stand against His will. Sometimes we are tempted to believe that men also can do so many things. How many wonderful inventions! How much skill and power they display! And yet, how small is the power of men in comparison with the power of God! At the moment when mankind seems to be on the brink of some great discovery, if often happens that some great difficulty crops up which they are unable to overcome. How often we want something done but cannot achieve it, or we

want to stop some force and we find ourselves powerless.

In front of a tomb, think of the "power" of men and you will smile. No one can halt death indefinitely. Science must ultimately be overcome. Nor can the decay of the body in the tomb be averted. On the contrary, look at the unrestricted power of God. He did as He wished, as He wanted, when He wanted, with no other agency to impose limits except His Holy Will. The whole creation cost Him no effort. No loss of energy, no help from His angels, no time was required for His achievement. Things sprang into existence immediately, out of nothingness, in obedience to His command. No other act was needed save the act of His Divine Will.

And even now He keeps and preserves all existence. Everything is in His hands. Should He wish to send the whole of creation into nothingness, He would just have to withhold His hands and power. He has only to abandon us to ourselves. All the power of all men together cannot create, cannot bring a blade of grass into existence out of nothingness, cannot out of nothingness shape a little ant, a little worm! It cannot even send back to nothingness a little insect or anything existing.

That is why the angels gather around His throne, trembling in front of His power and majesty, all obeying His least desire reverently, eager to carry it into execution. This devouring fire, those mighty masses of water, this glorious air, that gigantic impetus of the seas, those complicated movements of the planets and stars that crowd space, everything in one word, life and death, health and illness, time and eternity, is subject to God. Everything is under His command.

2. The Omnipotence of Mary

Now take your eyes from the omnipotence of God and look at the delegated omnipotence communicated by God to the most holy Virgin. The Eternal Father joys to crown the forehead of Mary with the crown of power. He raises Her up to the level of His own omnipotence. He makes Her share the secrets of His power.

Mary has, then, all power over all creatures, in heaven, on earth and in hell. God wished to reward Her for Her labours and for the loving attention with which She had looked after God's own Son during His life on earth; and not finding anything better than a gift which should, to some extent, be

on the level of His own divinity, He crowned Her with the crown of supreme power, so that if God is all-powerful by nature, Mary would similarly be all-powerful by grace. Now we can rightly call Mary the Empress of heaven, the Queen of the earth, the Mistress of all creation. Is it not consoling to know that your Mother is such a powerful Queen? Should you not rightly feel proud of it? Should you not be strengthened in confidence towards Her?

Indeed, how would we fare if Our Lady while wishing to help us in our miseries was unable to do so? Does this not happen a thousand times with mothers of this earth? How many great things a mother dreams for her child and yet all remains a dream, since she is not in a position to give them shape! Could you imagine Our Lady in such a plight? How could we place our trust in Her if we could doubt Her power? But no, do not doubt it. What She wants as a Mother, She can do as a Queen. Consequently, we cannot doubt either Her help, or Her most powerful patronage.

3. How Mary Uses Her Omnipotence

Now reflect how She makes constant use of Her power in our behalf. Her omnipotence is not a mere

title of glory; it is not a mere honour, an empty title of no practical use. Nothing of the sort. Not for a moment does that power remain inactive. She does not use it for any caprice or whim. The measure of Her power is Her own will but this Will of Mary is inseparably united to the Will of God. Whatever She wants She also attains. But She will never want nor can She ever desire anything except what God wants and desires. And since what God wants is the salvation of the world, the sanctification of souls, it is to this, above all, that Mary exercises all the immense strength of Her power.

How many sinners secure repentance through Mary! How many saints owe their sanctity to Her! How many graces have been showered from Her hands upon those who trust in Her! Thank God for the wonderful crown that He has placed on the head of Our Heavenly Mother. That crown is a glory for Mary, while being of immense profit to you. Rejoice with your beloved Mother on seeing Her so exalted, sharing God's every power. Often repeat, "The Queen of Heaven is My Mother". Never forget, especially in the moment of need, that if you are with Mary, nothing can be wanting to you. In order to help you She will do all that is needed,

even should miracles and wonders be required. That is nothing for Her since She has power also over them. Let this confidence quicken the whole of your life. Never let yourself be carried away by discouragement.



MEDITATION 80

The Threefold Crown — Wisdom

1. The Divine Word

He is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God's Wisdom. This is why He is the Word, the un-created Word of God and this is the reason why the gift of wisdom is especially attributed to Him although it is a gift common to the three Divine Persons. This Son of God is at the same time the Son of Mary; consequently, is it not fit that at the coronation of His Mother, He should hasten to place on Her head as a magnificent crown His particular gift of wisdom? And how great was that wisdom? Who can answer this question? The wisest man is also the man most aware of his limitations, of his ignorance. He knows he knows nothing. Everywhere we are surrounded by mystery, not only in the supernatural order, where indeed, without the divine revelation we could know abso-

lutely nothing, but also in the natural order. How little men know!

Look at the doctor most eminent in his profession, completely baffled by a tiny germ whose identity, or even presence, he is unable to diagnose. We know the effects of many things —light, heat, and electricity for example; but their real nature is an absolute mystery. Lift your eyes to God and contemplate the wisdom that knows everything: past, present, future; which knows all the actual and even all possible facts, all that will and will not happen. Listen to the words of St. Paul: *From Him no creature can be hidden: everything lies bare, everything is brought face to face with Him, this God to whom we must give our account. The psalmist had said before: He counted the multitude of the stars, He calleth everyone by its name.* The most intimate thoughts, the quickest flashes of our mind, the deepest feelings of our heart, He sees them all, He knows them perfectly, He reads our souls with the greatest ease. How great must be this wisdom since the very infinite essence of God has no secrets for Him. He knows it even from eternity. How can we approach even slightly the infinite knowledge of this great Divine Wisdom?

2. "Sedes Sapientiae"

Now try to penetrate the incomprehensible mystery of the communication of this wisdom by the Divine Word on our Heavenly Mother. One day God dropped a tiny fraction of wisdom upon Solomon who thus became the wisest of all men. What then must be the wisdom of Our Heavenly Mother who has been admitted into the knowledge of the innermost mysteries of the Godhead? And this to the extent that, as far as it is possible for a creature, no mysteries were impenetrable to Her as there are no mysteries for God. She learnt the plan of creation and the plan of redemption in all their most minute details. How well She understood now the reason of all that had happened throughout Her mortal life! How She then would praise the infinite wisdom which had so wonderfully conceived and arranged everything with so much order, with so much harmony although to the short-sightedness of the human intellect it might not look so.

God also infused in Her all the knowledge that She needed to help our souls. Thus, She is aware of all the ruses and snares of the enemy, of the time and shape of his temptations, of our incommensurable misery and needs, of our shameful hesitations

and discouragements, of our good desires and right intentions. If we sin, we are sinning in the sight of Our Mother whose eyes see all. If we act rightly, it is She who witnesses it and records it in order that, one day, we may be rewarded for it.

3. The Teacher of Our Faith

That is why we must have recourse to Her and implore from Her the light of faith. She is Our Mistress and Teacher, and even before Her assumption into Heaven She fulfilled this task. In the bosom of that budding early Church, in the supper room, how many things She must have taught the apostles; how many doubts must She have dispelled, how many details of the life of Christ She revealed to them! If She had not spoken, what would we know of the Annunciation, the dialogue between Her and the Angel, the details of the birth in Bethlehem, of the flight into Egypt and the idyllic and happy moments of Nazareth? It may be said that the apostles knew of the mystery of the Incarnation through Her. And now that She is in heaven in possession of such heavenly wisdom, what must be Her knowledge of the mysteries of our holy Faith! In the science of prayer, of union and familiarity with God She is, then, our

teacher. She lived up to the highest standard of this life of union with God; and now in heaven, since She is immersed into the very essence of God as much as it can be granted to a creature, what summits will it have reached?

She is the Teacher of all virtues. She knows very well the difficulties that besiege us. She gauges the violence of the temptations that assail us, the roaring impetus of our passions in spate. She weighs our weakness and utter misery. That is why we must have recourse to Her. No one better than She will teach us what to do: the plan of combat, the line of our behaviour. How safe do soldiers feel when they sense the firm hand of the experienced leader who manoeuvres them to victory! In this manner we must trust our Mother, our Teacher, our Leader.

Lastly, She knows our mishaps, our faults and sins, our ingratitude and rebellions, the misery and the humiliation, the suffering and irritation that all this entails. She knows the punishment we have deserved. Go, then, to Mary and with great humility recount them to Her. Bring no excuses; hold nothing back, for She knows all. Merely ask for pardon and the grace of repentance. Tell Her to shower a ray of light on you, to give you just a flash of Her

wisdom, just a little share of Her knowledge so that you may understand yourself well and understand God and beg the grace that from that knowledge may arise in your heart a profound humility and love of abounding charity.



MEDITATION 81

The Threefold Crown — Love

1. God is Love

This is the sweetest and most exact definition of God. Thus, is He defined by the disciple of love, by the one who learnt it whilst hearing the beating of the Heart of Christ, when leaning on it during the Last Supper. All that God could say has been condensed into this divine word: Love is the very essence of the life of God, its term and goal. Indeed, the life of God, as that of the pure spirits, consists exclusively in knowing and loving. But, in some way, knowledge is directed towards love as to its goal and necessary complement. If God is infinite, eternal, uninterrupted knowledge, He is, and above all, love by essence. He loves Himself because He knows Himself and thus does God want to be known by men.

The Lord said once to a holy soul: "Call Me the Lord, the Omnipotent, the Creator, but above all

call me the Love since this is the name that most pleases me and this is the truth you must especially know of Me." See, then, how all the manifestations of His life towards us are as many expansions of His love. Creation, Preservation, Incarnation, Redemption cannot be understood except through love. If therefore love is the life of God, it must necessarily and essentially be found in the three Divine Persons. This name, however, is especially applied to the Holy Spirit because He proceeds by way of love from the Father and from the Son. Then, if God the Father crowns Mary with His omnipotence, if God the Son makes Her a sharer of His wisdom, it is quite fitting that God the Holy Spirit should, when crowning Her, immerse Mary in the source and spring of all love. See then your Beloved Mother shining with the internal force of that fire of divine love which burns Her with a similar impetus as that with which the three Divine Persons are consumed; in those tides of love in which they are completely immersed.

2. Queen of Love

And since you now see Mary crowned as the Queen of Love, try to enter into Her heart a little

deeper. God is love, so Mary most resembles Him because there is no one who loves with more vehemence than She. If love was so powerful that it brought God down to the earth and impelled Him to die for us, how great will that love shine now?

God was entitled to all the love of the human heart. He demanded it; but ungrateful men refused to correspond. God then set about looking for a heart that should compensate Him for that want of love on our part. He was looking for a heart that alone would love Him with a more profound and sincere love than all the rest of the hearts of men together. Now this heart where the love of God can rest and find its complacency in a perfect manner, that heart which gives Him satisfaction and is worthy of Him is, after the Heart of Jesus, the most pure Heart of Mary.

Rejoice at the thought that God has found in the love of Our Lady the correspondence that He deserves. It is thanks to Her love that the creation of mankind has not turned out to be utterly useless, disappointing and fruitless. Put together all the love of the saints and angels of heaven; yet you will still exclaim with the Church: Its foundations rest on the highest mountains. All the love of the

saints and angels is nothing compared with that of the heart of the Virgin. Where they all end, there She begins. What is summit and climax for men is just a foundation and beginning for Her. How happy should we feel at the thought that there is at least one heart that so loves God! And then what should we say of the love that Mary bears us? She loves us with the heart of a Mother. All the tenderness of a mother's love, all the maternal fondness is magnified to near infinity in the Heart of Mary. See how during Mary's life on earth the natural love of a mother becomes supernatural, and is now rendered divine by the Holy Ghost. It is absolutely impossible for us to fathom that love. Be ashamed of yourself and be persuaded that only by looking at God and seeing Mary in Him you can understand what the word "love" means. Compare your love and the love of your fellow creatures to that. My God, what things men call love!

3. Fruits of This Love

Above all, it entitles us to have the certainty and the assurance of Her protection. Mary can no longer help loving us even when She sees us utterly unworthy of Her love, even when we ungrateful chil-

dren go to the extent of abandoning and despising the gift of Her love by preferring earthly interests. Her love rendered divine will accompany us in all the most difficult moments of our existence. If it is true that Mary on account of Her crown of wisdom has a perfect knowledge of our needs and if She has superabundant power to come to the rescue through Her all-powerful intercession, She on account of Her love is never unwilling to come to our help. Consequently, we should greet Her as Queen and Mother of Mercy; She wants to help us. Consult your heart. It will confirm this view and tell you that thus it has always been all your life long.

Finally, Our Lady, Queen of love, teaches you to direct your heart towards God. You must love God above all things with an intensity that should be paramount. This means that you must be ready to lose your goods, nay even your life, rather than offend Him. The devil will hamper you and will try to prevent you from fulfilling this most sweet duty. Instead, who can help you attain this end? Your Mother. First of all by Her example that you should imitate. Secondly, by Her love. To love Mary on account of Her union with God, is to love God. You have no excuse for being so cold in the love of God.

What excuse can you allege for being slack in loving your Mother and Queen? See to it that your soul loves Mary as the daughter and handmaid of God. Do not let anyone surpass you in the fulfilment of this sweet duty of love.



MEDITATION 82

Mary, Universal Mediatrix of All Graces

1. In What Mediation Consists

A mediator is a link between two extremes, as dawn is a mean between light and darkness. A mediator partakes of, and represents, both parties and embraces both as his own. According to St. Robert Bellarmine, a mediator is judge and umpire who administers justice between both contending parties. A mediator is a harbinger of peace since he lays down the conditions to which the opposing parties should submit so that lost friendship may be restored. A mediator is a royal favourite who imposes his influence with the monarch in order to obtain pardon and favour for those who have offended his majesty. He is, lastly, a martyr of charity who lays down his life in just reparation for the person offended. Now apply these principles to Our Lord Jesus Christ and you will see how full

of truth are the words of St. Paul: *There is only one God and only one Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ.* Our Lord, in virtue of His threefold character of Messias or Envoy of the Father, of Eternal Priest and of Redeemer of the world, is assuredly the real Mediator, the Angel of peace who appeases the wrath of God against man, since Jesus by laying down His life gives abundant satisfaction for all the sins of mankind. But after Christ, together with Christ, and through Christ, on account of the union that She had as His own Mother (certainly not considered in Herself but on account of the share She had in the work of our redemption) Mary is the real Co-Redemptrix of men, the perfect Mediatrix between God and ourselves.

Since She is Mother of God and our Mother, She consequently joins these two extremes and, as Mother of Mercy, She always gives Her verdict and sentence in favour of sinners. She is the Queen of Peace and therefore She obtains peace for those children who rebelled against God and were by sin in a state of war against their Creator. She is the praying Omnipotence and therefore, as St. Bernardine of Sienna says: “All things are subject to Mary, even, so to say, God Himself, since a word from Mary is

enough for God to grant what She desires." Finally, She is the Martyr of Charity and the Queen of Martyrs, a title She obtained together with Her Son, when She immolated Herself at the foot of the Cross, offering to the Eternal Father the Divine Victim and thereby constituting but one sacrifice by a perfect association with it.

2. The Dispenser of All Graces

It is Mary who administers the graces of God so that St. Alphonsus was able to say: "God desires that all graces should come to us through Mary." And St. Bernard exclaims: "Consider how God wants us to honour this Holy Queen of ours since He placed in Her the plenitude of all good, so that all graces, hopes and salvation reach us through Her." God is the author of everything that is good, of every grace, of every grade. The wealth of His treasures is inexhaustible but the key that controls them has been entrusted to Mary. As a housewife in a well-managed home administers the fruit of the labours of the father of the family, so it is with Mary. All the graces of God even those of the temporal order come to us through the hands of Mary. The intimate and unbreakable union between Christ and

Mary demands the universality of Her mediation. St. Paul calls Our Lord a second Adam, a heavenly Adam. Equally, the Church calls Mary the second Eve. Christ is the head of the Mystical Body; but Mary, according to the words of St. Pius X, is the neck that joins the head and limbs of the Body and transmits life to all the limbs. For this universal mediation to be practical and fruitful three conditions are required:

1. A total possession of the gift;
2. a will to give it to others;
3. the power to do so. Nobody can doubt that Our Blessed Lady possesses all graces.

The initial grace at the moment of Her conception was already greater than that of the saints and of the angels. A complete sanctity was achieved in Her since She was, in the words of the Angel, full of grace when becoming the Mother of God. The final grace in Mary was beyond all description and calculation since it never stopped growing for one single moment. Rightly was She called Empress and crowned as the Queen of heaven and earth.

The second and third conditions are that Mary should be willing and able to give us all graces. This is evident since it comes as a matter of conse-

quence from Her sweet titles of Mother and Queen. Mary is then to our great happiness the channel by which the grace of God flows into us.

3. The Mediation in the Gospel

a) She appears in the Incarnation as a *Co-Redemptrix* since at that moment by Her consent She accepted the sacrifice of being the Mother of Sorrows of the Man of Sorrows. In the presentation of the Child Jesus where She offers Her Son and renews Her generous immolation and hears from the lips of Simeon the cruel prophecy about the sword which pierces Her heart, She again shines forth as Co-Redemptrix. She is our Co-Redemptrix at the foot of the Cross when She associates Herself with Her Son in such a manner that both were two hosts of the same sacrifice.

b) When She visits St. Elizabeth and, thanks to the presence of Our Blessed Lady, the Baptist is sanctified in the womb of his mother, She is again a Mediatrix who intercedes, obtains and distributes graces. She is Mediatrix in the wedding of Cana where the first miracle of Our Lord is performed by the prayer — we might perhaps say at the imposi-

tion — of Mary when She succeeds in anticipating the hour of the manifestation of Her Son. She is a Mediatrix in the supper room on Pentecost Day where Mary prepares the apostles to receive the Holy Spirit, that is to say, where She cooperates with the sanctifying work of grace in the souls of the apostles.

4. God So Wants It

We must conclude that God has clearly manifested His will: He could have redeemed us without Mary, yet He did not. Then, though He could, He would not sanctify us without Mary. We owe a great devotion to Our Heavenly Mother for a thousand reasons but there will scarcely be one stronger to persuade us than this, since it indeed, comprises and sums up all the other titles. Out of love and gratitude towards such a lofty Mediatrix, nay also for our own interest and profit, we owe Her the most profound devotion. We must approach Jesus through Mary. We shall not manage to speak to Him without Her. God gives Himself to us through Mary. It is through Her that we must reach God. We must entirely give ourselves up to Mary so that She may lead us to God. This way is an

easy, a safe, a beautiful and consoling one. Courage, then; place yourselves in Her hands once and for ever; give your Mother the key of your heart that She may turn it at Her will; and worry no longer: whatever She arranges is always the best for us. Entreat Her to give you a little share in the graces She possesses but ask for one grace in particular, namely, the grace of loving Our Blessed Lord in life and in death, in time and in eternity, with Her and through Her.



MEDITATION 83

The Heart of Mary (1)

1. Double Object

The object of the devotion to the most Pure Heart of Our Lady may be considered in two ways. The material object and the formal object. Just as man is made of two elements, one material and visible, his body, the other spiritual and invisible, his soul, and the union of both elements makes the complete man, so in a similar manner in this devotion to the Heart of Mary we must distinguish its two elements in order to understand well in what this devotion consists.

The material element is the physical heart, the real and palpitating heart of Our Heavenly Mother, a heart of flesh, human and in everything similar to that of the rest of men. The formal element, the invisible and immaterial part, consists in the love, in that ardent charity contained in, and symbolised by,

that most Pure Heart. Putting either element aside would mean destroying, or at least maiming, this devotion to the Heart of Mary. Whenever we speak of, or meditate on, the most Pure Heart of Mary, we must mean to honour the love of the Holy Virgin contained in Her Heart as in a precious vessel. Her love is a jewel but Her Heart is the coffer which contains it.

2. Material Object

As the gem, such the ring; as the pearl, such the shell; as the jewel such the coffer. How beautiful must the Heart of Mary be! We have already meditated on the physical beauty of Mary; we have already said that God made Her the most beautiful of all creatures since She was to be the Mother of the most beautiful of the sons of men. All this beauty must have been condensed in that Immaculate Heart. The bodies of the saints, their relics and, in some instances, their heart, as for example in the case of St. Theresa of Jesus, are venerated by devoted souls. But there is no comparison between those relics, and the veneration they rightly receive, and the Heart of Our Heavenly Mother, since every act of cult rendered to the Heart of Mary redounds

as an act of honour to the person of Mary. We kiss the hand of a Superior, we kiss the foot of the Holy Father; but when doing so we show our respect and affection to the whole person. So it is with the Heart of Mary. Whatever honour we render it, is homage to Her whole person. It is Her greatness, Her virtue, Her purity and sanctity that we venerate and honour.

3. The Formal Object

We can leave aside the question whether indeed our heart of flesh influences us in our love. One thing is certain: our affections have a repercussion on our heart, they affect it. Whether it is sadness or joy, fear or anger. All is recorded in our heart; they speed up, or slow down, its beatings. They sometimes even paralyse it. Evidently there is a close connection between the physical life of our heart and the affective life of our soul.

Perhaps on account of this everybody refers to the heart as to the cause, the reason, the seat, or, at least, the symbol of love. And it is in this current and popular meaning that we refer to it. Consider then that in every man what interests us is his heart and therefore his love. This being so, how

much interest should we have in the Heart of Our Lady!

Man is what he is on account of his heart. All his science, all his ability and shrewdness, all his genius, have very little use for us if they happen to exist in a man about whom we say, "Oh, he has no heart!" How repulsive such a one is. On the contrary, how nice, how love-inspiring is a person, who has a large heart, a noble and worthy heart. Everything is explained in the saying, "He has a large heart”. Look now to your heavenly Mother who is at the same time the Mother of God. What kind of heart must God have placed in Her? If it had depended on you, what kind of heart would you have given Her? It could not actually depend on you but depend it certainly did on God. It was in God's hands that the Mother of His Son, that the Mother of all mankind should have this or that heart. So if it was given to Her by Him, how great it must be, how lovable in His sight! Mary had to love both God and men with a love that stands second only to God's own love. How great then must be a heart that enclosed such love!

4. Most Tender Devotion

It must be a sweet task indeed for you to penetrate into this Heart of Mary, to study its affections, to know its beatings, to be aware of its love. You cannot know Mary unless you have entered that Heart of Hers. To know Mary you must know Her Heart. The more you study Her love, the more complete your knowledge of Her will be. A sweet consideration indeed, and a sweet devotion too. God Himself knows Our Lady so He loves and esteems Her just for the love of Her heart. And not only Mary but ourselves also. We men know one other by looking at one anothers faces which is why we are so often sadly mistaken. How deceiving our appearance sometimes is! All of us have some share of hypocrisy. How skilful we are in concealing our real feelings. But God cannot be deceived. His knowledge is not based on appearances. He does not stop at a mere glance at our faces. He goes straight into the recesses of our heart. He reads what we are.

If when God in this manner looks into the Heart of Mary what complacency and satisfaction will He experience at that sight! When God looks at my heart will He feel pleased or disgusted, consoled or horrified?

Ask from Our Lord a ray of that penetrating light which pierces the heart. Use that divine light in order to look into the Heart of Your Mother and then seeing the difference be ashamed of your own soul and ask the grace of imitating Her. Entreat Her to make you a little more similar to Her, to give you a heart to Her own liking.



MEDITATION 84

The Heart of Mary (2)

1. Excellence of This Devotion

Let us try to understand better the reasons which should move us to profess a tender and loving devotion to the most Pure Heart of Mary. The first reason is that this is a most excellent devotion. In fact its material object is the very Heart of Mary, that Heart of which the Holy Ghost availed Himself for the work of the Incarnation. From that most Pure Heart there sprung the most Precious blood which shaped the sacred body of Jesus Christ and even His most Sacred Heart. Thence it was that the Lord took the blood which He was to offer on the Cross for the salvation of mankind.

That Heart was the centre and focus of the life of our Heavenly Mother. All its beatings, all its movements took a part in the incalculable merits which She was accumulating all Her life long. Follow the

footsteps of Mary and you will find that at Her every step Her Heart was recording Her impressions. Her Heart was moved with emotion on the day of Her annunciation for She was troubled at the sight of an angel, and his message caused a blush to colour Her delicate cheek. What would Her Heart feel on that first Christmas night when She saw the face of the little Jesus for the first time! How would that Heart tighten and feel choked with fear on the way to Egypt! And when old Simeon thrust that sword of sorrow into it, how would the Heart of Mary race! And how would the Pure Heart of Our Mother react to all His sufferings, to His disappearance in Jerusalem, to His Passion and Death. Everything that happened in Mary's life was reflected and recorded in Her Heart. Often, unless God had miraculously intervened to keep Her in life, Her heart would have borne it no longer! Do you not think that this consideration alone suffices to render this devotion more amiable and excellent in your sight?

And yet the reasons mount when we see in the Heart of Our Lady the sensitive organ of Her love, the instrument which received all Her impressions and all the messages of Her soul, translating them into love, whose ardent flame kept ever increasing.

We can hardly expect to understand this mystery, but we should certainly feel it. Enter into that ardent Heart and entreat Our Lady to likewise set us all on fire, so that our hearts may to some small extent share that love of which the most Pure Heart of Mary is overflowing.

2. The Will of God

God has given us no explicit injunction to honour the Heart of Our Lady, yet it is evident that God wants it and ardently desires it. We know He invites us to fix our abode in His loving Heart. Then how can we enter it? There is no other way than through the Heart of Our Heavenly Mother.

Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is the best road, the most fitting way to acquire a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. If it is God's Will that we should honour His Divine Heart, it is also His clear and precise Will, implicitly contained in the former, that we should honour the most Pure Heart of His Mother. *Behold this Heart that has so much loved men!* says Jesus, inviting us to His Love. The same, identical words may be applied also to Mary. There is no heart after that Heart of Jesus which has loved us so much; there is no heart which has taught us so

well to love God, as the Heart of Mary. No heart can be our model so well as Hers.

The tender complaint of the Sacred Heart of Jesus where He deplores the ingratitude of men applies to us all. When the Lord complained of our want of correspondence He was thinking of everyone of us. He was hinting at the behaviour of us all. Your heart will certainly endorse this statement. But the Heart of Mary is not like that. The Heart of Mary was the only one which was excluded from God's loving reproach. Jesus has no complaint about the Heart of His Mother. Must we not regard this model and there learn how to love the Heart of Christ? Would God not wish it? Do not say that He has not ordered it expressly. Was there any need for Him to command such an obvious duty?

Your heart should be enclosed in the Heart of Jesus. Consequently, you must enclose it in that of His Mother. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus presupposes a tender devotion to the Heart of Mary for this is the obvious Will of God. But there is something more. God's will in this regard has been manifested especially and precisely in these modern times. Life today has the hallmark of selfishness. Every day man's heart has become more

self-centred, more self-seeking, more oblivious of God, more forgetful of his neighbour. Where are those today who would sacrifice themselves for the love of God and of souls? What are the chief pursuits of the modern world? Even those who are good and even think themselves rather holy, what fire of charity have they? Do we not see them daily pursue their own profit, fight for the triumph of their self-love and self-interest? Shame! How unpleasant must this appear in the sight of the angels!

God demands the heart of men. He seeks man's love, and finds instead nothing but selfishness everywhere. It is on account of this, in order to cure this sick world of its want of love, that He has in these days torn open His breast, shown us His Heart and has through the example of His Divine Heart sent us an invitation to love.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the solution and the remedy which God has prepared to cure the modern sickness of the human heart. Be persuaded then: devotion to the Heart of Mary is an actual, urgent need; a pressing duty. We must waste no time. The heart of man cannot disregard this invitation which the Lord makes through His own Heart and through the Heart of His Heavenly Mother.

3. Even Self-love

Rightly understood, even self-love is a virtue. We say that charity begins at home and certainly, in matters of salvation and sanctification, we are bound to look after our soul more than we do after the others. That is a holy self-love, nay it is a necessary, a compulsory self-love. This should also embrace the precious devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In fact the fruits promised are so excellent. Remember the promises of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary. *I promise you that my Heart will be so enlarged as to share the wealth of this divine love amongst those who honour the Sacred Heart of Jesus and invite others to do likewise.* And that wealth is infinite.

Certainly, the greatest reward is love itself. We cannot be better paid than by the Sacred Heart of Jesus admitting us to His love and allowing us to enter into It. What better could we expect than to love Him and to be loved by Him? Yet the Lord has enhanced His condescension with such valuable promises that, indeed, out of self-love we should run to the practice of this devotion. And if you have not so far done so, by whom are you prevented except by your enemy, the devil?

Examine the causes of this apathy and this cowardice of yours in a business of such importance, and reflect that perhaps your failure to have devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is because you have not gone through the Heart of our Heavenly Mother. Consider that the Sacred Heart of Jesus will give you all He has promised, through the Heart of His Mother. Go to Mary then. Take shelter in Her Heart, abandon yourself there. Those who are lost in the Heart of Mary are bound to find themselves in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.



MEDITATION 85

The Heart of Mary (3)

1. A Well-Spring of Actual Graces

Let us go deeper into this subject until we are persuaded that we must profess devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. You remember the promises that the Sacred Heart of Jesus has made in favour of His devotees. They may be arranged in three groups:

1. actual graces;
2. sanctifying grace;
3. final grace, namely that of reaching the possession of God in Heaven.

All souls, even the holiest ones, stand in need of those divine helps which are called actual graces, since indeed without them no meritorious act can be done, no supernatural act can be performed. These actual graces are a loving present proffered by the divine bounty. Man does not deserve them

but God gives them abundantly and generously. The source whence they spring is the Sacred Heart of Jesus who in this manner shows us the love He has for us. But the channel through which they flow into our heart is always Our Blessed Lady in whose most Pure Heart all those graces are stored like waters in a reservoir. Thence they flow to us. Do you now see where you will find those graces? Do not go to the throne of justice because nothing is due to you out of justice. Go to the throne of bounty and mercy of the very Heart of God. But which is that throne, where it is to be found? Nowhere else save in the Most Pure Heart of Mary Our Beloved Mother. It all, then, depends on you. You have the final word in the seeking out of that well-spring, in the approaching of this reservoir to draw from it those graces which you need and which God is most desirous to grant. In fact He does on a thousand occasions grant them to you even at times before you ask for them.

But now meditate on this one point. God always grants you sufficient actual graces according to your state and condition so that nothing is left undone on His part in order that you may save your soul and sanctify yourself. But it depends exclusively

upon you whether you do so or whether you choose to harden yourself in sin, thus choosing your own condemnation. You yourself by your behaviour, by your correspondence to grace, render those graces efficacious or inefficacious, useful or even totally useless. All this depends exclusively upon you. To you alone will one day be imputed your falls and faults. From you only will a strict account be demanded about the right or wrong use, the esteem or contempt of those graces. Will you then not turn to useful and efficacious account those graces which God gives you? The chief interest of this devotion derives from these considerations.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Heart of Mary becomes easier. If you know how to get inside these two Hearts your soul will benefit incalculably. You should not fail to notice how in the promises of the Sacred Heart, the array of graces and favours promised is so abundant and so manifold that one might almost say that the Sacred Heart of Jesus wants to make sure that we profit to the utmost from this devotion. There are promises for sinners, even for the most hardened ones, for the tepid and cold, for the fervent striving after sanctity, for laymen, for religious, for religious communities,

for individuals, families, nations, priests and apostles: to all an abundant shower of graces is promised; and above all, the efficacy of those graces is guaranteed. Jesus will see to it that for His devotees these graces are not useless and void. Is there anything else you can think of, of more importance, or of greater interest for your soul? Why have you not embraced this true and solid devotion with all your might? Beg from the Heart of Our Lady to teach you how to know and love the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

2. Sanctifying Grace

A consequence of the foregoing is that all actual graces rendered efficacious by this devotion will necessarily bring about a phenomenal increase of spiritual life, namely of sanctifying grace.

We have already considered something of this; but we can never dwell on it too much. Keep in mind that this sanctifying grace is a rich treasure, in fact the life of your soul. It is your capital, your personal fortune, the only one you will really possess, the only one worthwhile, the only one which one day will accompany you before the judgement seat of God. God granted you His first grace at holy baptism. It was, as it were, the initial capital which

God invested in your soul and which He entrusted to your administration. He wanted that through your good works and especially through the loving reception of His holy sacraments you should enhance and increase it. But what have you done with that capital? Has it grown in your heart? Is it frozen, dissipated, lost, or inactive? Happy you are if it is yielding an ever mounting interest. But most unhappy if it is not. Devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary ensures life and growth in your soul. The fundamental practice of this devotion is love, a pure exercise of the love of God, and it is precisely the love of God that keeps, fosters and increases grace in our souls. St. Catherine pointed out that if one drop of the love of God fell into Hell, Hell would instantly be transformed into Heaven and all the devils immediately changed again into angels. If this be so, what wonders will the practice of love work in a soul? And as the devotion to the Heart of Jesus is naught but the practice of love, is there any wonder that His precious promises are fulfilled? A man dying of asphyxia is restored by establishing again the rhythmical movements of his breathing. In the case of heart trouble an injection is given which quickens and stimulates the beat-

ing of the heart which otherwise might fail. This is what the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus does with us. It injects into us the love of God. It restores the breathing, the pulsation, the life of our soul by restoring in it the exercise of the love of God. That is why sinners there find pardon while the just find sanctification.

3. The Final Grace

This is the climax of all the graces and promises of the Divine Heart. Final perseverance, the final grace, the grace of a happy death — who is not preoccupied about this problem? Which of us can with poise and serenity face that step into eternity, aware as we are of its uncertainty? When and how shall we get across? How much depends on that step!

The eternity which follows that step is a frightening thought: to be either eternally happy or eternally lost. What a terrible alternative. And a most frightening circumstance is that when you are making that step nobody is going to help you. Your soul will find itself all alone. Nobody will see or accompany you. Your soul abandoned, alone, will have to plunge into eternity; willy-nilly, well or ill-prepared, in grace or in sin. See yourself at that

moment, that moment which one day you will certainly have to face. Take a glimpse at the eternity awaiting you. The mere consideration of it makes one tremble. How shall we feel when we shall be called on not only to take a mental glimpse but actually to take the plunge?

Oh consoling devotion to the Sacred Heart! The Sacred Heart of Jesus Who knows all things well, understands this well and hastens to help you. And how great is His help! Wanting to render this frightful step easy for you, how well He does it. He only asks you to love Him, to give Him your heart through the Heart of Our Lady, to devote yourself entirely to the devotion of the Sacred Hearts of Mary and Jesus. Could there be anything easier? Anything more reasonable and just? And in return He promises you final perseverance. He guarantees to you final victory; your triumph will be complete, your reward and crown eternal.

Listen then to, and impress deeply upon your heart, those most consoling words of Our Lord: My Divine Heart will become for them a safe shelter at that last hour. And, too, God will send the Most Holy Virgin to help, to console and welcome the souls of those who practise this devotion. She will

take them to dwell eternally within the very same Heart of Jesus.

To live and to die within that Sacred Heart! Could there be anything more glorious? You will certainly achieve this if you learn how to shut yourself inside the Most Pure Heart of Mary. Promise once more you will do so. Beg Her pardon for not having done so in the past. Give Her your heart once for ever and entreat Her to accept your miserable gift by counting you in the number of Her true devotees.



MEDITATION 86

The Heart of Mary (4)

1. The Excellence of This Heart

Let us take for our consideration some of the treasures which God was pleased to store in the Heart of His and Our Mother. The excellence of the Heart of Our Lady depends on its union with the Divine Heart of Jesus, that it to say, with the very same Heart of God. How intimate and true was Her union with the Divinity!

On account of Her dignity of Mother of God, Mary had been admitted to share in God's life as much as it is possible for a creature. There was one time in Her life where really the life of God was the life of Mary. The life of God-made-man depended on the life of Mary. The Heart of God beat under the throbbings of the Heart of Mary. The union of both Hearts was such that there was a common life shared by both. But the Heart of Mary always con-

tinued this life of union with the Heart of Her Son. That Heart had no other love, no other will, no other sentiments than those of the Heart of Jesus. Mary's Heart always responded like an echo to whatever took place in the Heart of Her Son.

Hence the excellence of this Most Pure Heart of Mary. Hence it was that this Heart of Mary loved God more than all the creatures of heaven and earth together. Hence it was that God was pleased with this Heart and with its love more than with that of all the angels and men together. We can imagine how beautiful it would have been if man had never sinned after the fall of Adam and that the hearts of all men had given themselves above all up to the love of God. And yet all this would have been insignificant, a something much below what is due to God.

The only heart that loves God with the love He deserves is the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and after Him, but together with Him and through Him, the Most Pure Heart of Mary. This is the heart and this is the love with which God is certainly well pleased.

The Heart of Mary and the Heart of Her Son are a sublime union thanks to which the divine life of

God flows down to, is shared and is loved by, the Heart of Our Lady.

2. Its Sanctity

From this most perfect union between both Hearts springs the marvellous sanctity of the Heart of Mary. Sanctity consists in a participation with God, in a love which transforms the soul into God, in an elevation which makes our soul a true image and likeness of God. God fixed this aim when creating man and shaping his heart. He wanted the king of creatures to be according to His own image and likeness.

That is why a human heart reaches the perfection of being God's image, of having in itself a likeness to the heart of God, when He is able to exclaim with St. Paul, *It is not I, it is Christ that lives in me.* Then he has reached this perfection, he has attained sanctity.

But which heart could in this compare with that of Mary? Which heart was closer, more intimately united and more perfectly partaking in the life of God than Hers? Which heart was more totally transformed into God's? Which could claim more truly to be an image or likeness of God than

Hers? Where could be found a better mirror without blemish, capable of reflecting the sanctity of God more perfectly and faithfully? To which heart could those words of St. Paul, *It is Christ that lives in me*, more fittingly apply than to the Heart of Mary, not excluding the heart of St. Paul or of any other saint?

If you pause to consider each of the most important perfections of God and you apply each to our Heavenly Mother, you will see all those divine perfections reflected in Her heart by virtue of this close union and ineffable communication of Her Heart with that of God. The Heart of Mary is the tabernacle of the Godhead. It is the living temple of Divinity, where God has come down to fix His dwelling, where He wishes to abide for ever. All is holy in this Heart; nothing in it, not the lightest movement, no thought, no desire, no love, no word, no action which is not utterly holy. Everything is saintly in it.

Now place your poor heart in front of this seat of sanctity, of this mirror without blemish and compare yours with Hers. Confronted with Mary's you will easily detect some vice, some fault, some imperfections in your heart. Insist and study this com-

parison, because you will certainly derive from it a great increase in your love towards the Most Pure Heart of Mary and an increase in the contempt of self and of the imperfections and faults which so deform your heart.

3. Its Beauty

The sanctity of this Most Pure Heart renders it most beautiful in the sight of God and of the angels and men who contemplate it. If the Heart of the Virgin is holy, with the holiness it shares with God, it must also be most beautiful with a beauty taken from God. The Divine Essence is the source, cause and origin of all that is beautiful. Should the sun stop shining, all the things of earth would lose their beauty. We do not conceive natural beauty without the light of the sun.

So, it is with the beauty of the soul. Without God there would be no beauty whatsoever, either in the natural order or especially as regards the supernatural beauty of the souls. And since the Heart of Mary partakes of the beauty of God Himself, to the extent that it appears to be identically the same, how great and beautiful must be the Heart of Our Mother. The real and abiding beauty is that

of the heart. The external beauty is just a reflection, a glimpse, of the eternal beauty. You can then imagine how all the beauty of Mary was contained and summed up in Her Heart.

The Church, ecstatic in front of the beauty of the Heart of Mary applies to Her the lyrical words of Holy Scripture: *How beautiful Thou art! Thou art all shining. There is no stain to tarnish Thy beauty. Thou hast wounded the Heart of Thy Divine Spouse. The daughters of Sion, on seeing Thee, blessed and praised Thy beauty. Grace and charm has spread over Thy lips and spreads over Thy face. On account of Thy beauty God has blessed Thee from without. Prosperous walk on with the shining of that peerless beauty, ruling over all hearts as a Queen of incomparable splendour.*

4. Your Own Heart

Now let us apply all the foregoing to our own hearts. God wants us to share in the excellence, sanctity, and beauty with which He enriched the Heart of our Mother. He expects our heart to become similar to Hers. He wants to place His complacency also in us.

Of the Son of Mary He could say: *Behold My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*. He wants to

say the same of us. He wants us to be like Jesus, a child of Mary, a child of His by adoption. And through this adoption He wants to establish with us that intimate communication, that close union He had with the Heart of Mary, making us thereby partakers of the same divine life.

The Holy Spirit wants our heart to be His temple and shrine. And He gives us the graces necessary to purify and beautify it and render it worthy. Happy the heart which is chosen by the Divine Trinity for their throne. Happy the heart which knows how to rise to that great dignity. Is your heart so? Do you know how to approach that gift of God which calls you to partake in divine life? Search your conduct and see whether you are corresponding to the grand plan framed for your eternal happiness by the wisdom and love of God. Grand indeed, if you strive to direct and unify your intentions, your desires, your affections, your loves in accordance with the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Most Pure Heart of Mary. See whether, indeed, this Most Pure Heart is your model. See whether you make any effort to become similar to God through this ineffable union with God which was the source of the excellence, sanctity and beauty of the Heart of

Mary. Entreat Our Blessed Lady to be your perfect Mediatrix in the surrender of your heart to Jesus. Hand over your heart to Her entirely, seriously and permanently and leave Her free to do with it whatever She wills until finally She shapes it to the likeness of the Heart of Jesus.



MEDITATION 87

The Heart of Mary (5)

1. A Perfect Order

Here is another wonder which adorns, in an extraordinary way, the Most Pure Heart of Mary, something which is intimately related to its shining beauty. Order is an indispensable element in beauty. St. Augustine goes so far as to define beauty as the shining splendour of order.

In our heart, order consists in regulating and directing all its movements according to the rule imposed on us by God. In every order there needs must be a rule. In a library, the size of the books might be taken as the standard of arrangement, or you might classify the books according to subjects, age, binding. The basis of the arrangement can vary. But order is based on rule for it is through rule that every object is assigned its own place. The heart also has its own rule. Our will, our mind,

our senses, all our powers must submit to the rule which subjects them to the Will of God. Therefore there will be order in our mind when our judgements are submitted to the judgement of God, when our thoughts are according to the thoughts of God. In a similar manner, order in our will consists in loving everything according to the rank of its merits but always with love inferior to and subjected to the love of God. The rule of love is to love God above all things. The rule which orders the use of our senses demands that they are subjected to our reason and not at the mercy of our whims.

Finally, there is order in our heart and in our whole being when we follow the Will of God. How beautiful is this orderly submission. Look at the starry sky. Admire those gigantic globes of fire, keeping their dizzy speeds in spite of their enormous weight. See how everything is so perfectly arranged that there is no collision or interference. The marvellous order imprinted by the Divine Wisdom shines forth everywhere in nature. Only man, only the human heart, can abuse the power of his will, the gift of his freedom. He seems to delight in destroying this divine order. How sad! No matter how charming and sublime nature appears in its wise

arrangement, there is no more beautiful sight than a well ordered heart with all its movements and aspirations directed towards God. Is your heart like this, or must you realise with sadness the disorder that prevails in it? And this disorder might perhaps be enormously devastating. Disorder in uncontrolled passions, in unmortified senses, in an unruly heart.

Every sin is a disorder. If sin abides in you what will be the state of your heart? The supreme law which should govern your life is this: Man has been created for the purpose of praising, revering and serving the divine majesty of God. How do you keep this rule? Thus can you gauge the degree of order in your soul.

2. Total Simplicity

A consequence of this disorder is the continuous agitation in our lives. How much noise and restlessness there is in our exterior world! How much anxiety and anguish inside our soul on account of our passions, the preoccupations of life, the storms of our mind and the impressions which penetrate our hearts. We go through a tumultuous life, experiencing incidents which too often throw us off our

balance and absorb all our activities. We lack that simplicity which gives union and harmony to the currents which envelop our heart.

According to the teaching of Our Lord, Martha is an example of the tumultuous agitation, whilst Mary is a model of simplicity, the type of those souls who have this golden rule imprinted within. One thing only really matters and this one thing gives unity and simplicity to the variety of happenings of life, be they prosperous or adverse, so that nothing disturbs them, nothing throws them off their balance since they are all intent upon that best portion of their choice.

If you also want your heart to be in order apply that same rule of simplicity to your thoughts, affections, intentions, activities. Thoughts are simplified and reduced to unity by a reminder of the presence of God. See God everywhere, direct every thought to Him, get rid of those thoughts which do not lead you to Him. Can you imagine yourself troubled and afflicted and disturbed by the world, the devil and the flesh if the remembrance of God were the guiding thought of your life?

Simplicity in affections will give a wonderful unity to all the forces of your heart and will prevent

you from attaching yourself unduly to any creature. A heart always in search of God keeps its love for Him, since it loves Him above all things and loves everything for His sake.

Finally, simplicity of intention demands that you propose no other aim to your actions, labour and fatigues than God Himself, the only final object worthy of your cares and activities. See now whether your heart is not uselessly tom by the tumultuous multiplicity of its activities. Only one thing matters: to love and serve God, to attain to the ultimate goal, God.

3. Mary's Heart

The tempter might tell you that this is just a fine theory, quite out of reach for everyone. Let your answer be the keeping of the Most Pure Heart of Mary before your eyes. There you find theory brought to splendid practice. There you have the model which God gives us not for mere admiration but for imitation too. In the Heart of Mary there is found the fulfilment of the most harmonious order since all Her thoughts, desires, activities down to the most insignificant movement were in Her wonderfully orderly.

Every imperfection and fault is a disorder and in the heart of Mary there never was even the slightest fault or shadow of disorder. Her will, Her intelligence, Her memory, Her senses, all in Her was submitted to that supreme rule of the human heart: "Man has been created for the purpose of praising, revering and serving the divine majesty of God."

We could apply to Our Blessed Lady that challenge of Christ: Who can convict me of sin? Who could find any disorder in the Heart of Our Lady? Unity of thoughts, of affections, of intentions; Her Heart was always united to that of Jesus, the only goal of Her actions. The Heart of Jesus requested St. Margaret to unite her intentions to those of His Divine Heart, since in this way the slightest actions would deserve torrents of graces. We can then imagine how Mary would have brought about this unification of Her life, of Her intentions and of Her Heart with the Heart of Her divine Son. And if it was said of the Son of Mary that *He did all things well*, the same should be said of Mary on account of this simplicity of Her heart and this perfect union with the Heart of Jesus.

Request your good Mother to give you the grace to imitate this unity so that your heart may not be

divided amongst creatures but rather kept whole and united with the Heart of the Divine Saviour through Her.



MEDITATION 88

The Heart of Mary (6)

1. Suffering and Sorrows

The heart is the seat, or at least the symbol, of love, and as a consequence it is the seat, or the symbol, of sorrow. A heart that loves, suffers. The measure of a loyal and true love is always the intensity of suffering and sorrow.

The Heart of Our Lady was to be the heart of a mother but of a sorrowful mother. Her heart always appears pierced by a cruel sword. Who could ever fathom how much that heart suffered? Before the passion of Our Lord Her Heart was always flooded with sorrow since She well knew all that the prophets had foretold regarding that tremendous suffering He would have to bear for our redemption. At the cradle of Bethlehem on seeing the surrounding poverty, on experiencing the ignorant contempt with which men greeted the birth of Her

Son, Her delicate motherly heart would suffer most deeply. And if you go through every mystery of the life of Jesus you will see how every one of them is marked by some new suffering of the heart of Our Lady.

The anxieties of the flight into, and the exile in, Egypt, the loss of the Child, the presentation in the temple, the prophecy of Simeon, was not all this a terrible overture to the frightful anguish of the Passion? When this finally, arrived, the Heart of Our Lady was transformed into an immense ocean of the most bitter waters. It was then that Simeon's dreadful prophecy was fulfilled by a sword of sorrow piercing that Heart as no other heart had ever borne before.

Try to imagine something of Mary's frightful suffering when at the scourging She saw Jesus tied to the column, torn by the blows, with the crown of thorns, the reed and the purple rag, made a mock king. Try to picture what was experienced by that Heart on hearing the yells of that mob, people of God, those people who were supposed for centuries on end to have been sighing for their Messias.

Accompany Our Lady as She ascends Calvary. A truly generous and sorrowful Mother. She wit-

nesses the cruel scenes, the repeated falls under the weight of the cross, the heavy blows of the hammer, the nails which pierced the feet and the hands, the raising of the cross with Jesus on it so disfigured by His sufferings, and then three endless hours of agony. How we long for the end, for the release of death. Our heart can no longer stand that prolonged agony! What must have happened in the Heart of Mary during the agony or Her Son?

And then listen to those words of the dying Victim. Realise the exchange of children. She loses a divine Son Who is replaced by us, ungrateful sinners whose Mother She begins to be! Then the sight of His last moments; the thrust of the spear; the piercing of His Heart while Hers breaks down under the spear of sorrow. Finally, when for the last time She held Him in Her arms. She pressed Him against Her heart and then withdrew to the tremendous solitude of the night to weep over Her sad loss. Where is the heart and the mind capable of encompassing the sufferings of the Heart of Mary?

2. The Causes of That Sorrow

What made that Heart suffer so much was first of all Her ardent love for God and Her great desire

to procure His glory. Consequently, every sin produced a frightful horror in Her, for Mary clearly saw sin as the enemy of God and of souls. We shall never understand how this consideration tortured the Heart of Mary for the simple reason that our love is different altogether from Hers. Often indeed, we ourselves sin and thus offend the majesty of God. At other times we see the sins of others with indifference, without rushing to atone for them or striving to prevent an offence against God. Finally, for want of love, we fail to give ourselves to God's due service and glory; nor do we surrender our heart to Him with generosity. How then can we realise the sufferings of the Heart of Mary when She saw how the hearts of men would leave God's glory to the delays of their own whims and caprices.

Another cause of Her sorrow was the love She bore us; a love very similar to that which She had for God Himself. She had an ardent desire for our salvation and sanctification. The saints were prepared for any sacrifice for the salvation of mankind. St. Paul bore so many hardships in his apostolic journeys. He was ever prepared to accept curses and anathemas for the salvation of souls. Equally, St. Augustine wrote, "I don't want my salvation if

you also are not saved." For St. Francis Xavier, no suffering was too great provided he could save souls. And likewise all the apostles and holy men. How great then was the love of Mary for souls since more than anyone else She knew the value of a soul and the love which God bears for each one of them. In consequence Our Lady was bound to love souls with an ardour second only to the love of God, quite above the love which all the saints and apostles together had for souls.

A third cause of Her sufferings is to be found in the knowledge which She had of the life, passion and death of Her Son. For some human rebellious souls the redemption would be of no practical avail. How few would choose to sanctify themselves through the Blood so generously shed by divine love! Our Lady could see how the centuries would pass — as twenty have already gone by — and yet the greater part of the world would remain heathen and even the Christian and Catholic world would to a great extent remain half pagan. She would see how often even souls especially consecrated to the service of God would deeply wound the Heart of Her Son. How could the Heart of Mary not suffer in the face of all this! "And for this", She would say,

"has Jesus shed all His blood, in order that paganism may keep on victorious! In order that the hatred of God, the indifference and coldness for His kingdom, selfishness and sensuality and interest should be rampant all over the world?"

3. The Depth of This Sorrow

The sufferings of Mary border on the infinite. She suffered both as Mother of God and Mother of man, as Co-Redemptrix of the world. Her sorrow was no mere human sorrow. That is why we shall never understand, nay even imagine, the depth and vastness of Her sufferings. According to the Prophet Isaiah Jesus was to be "the man of sorrows, turned into a despicable worm, the despised of men". So then was the Redeemer. How would the Co-Redemptrix be? She was to be the Mother of Sorrows. She was not to undergo those physical tortures but nevertheless Her sufferings were to flood Her Heart.

The holy Fathers say that all the sufferings which Jesus bore in His holy body She also experienced, one by one, in Her Immaculate Heart. The Heart of Mary, so cruelly pierced by the sword, will ever be the model of those who suffer and be too

the sweet consolation and the divine balm which comforts and encourages those in their Calvary.

Learn how to read the sufferings of that sorrowful Heart. How much knowledge you can derive from it! With your unworthy behaviour, you, thousands of times, have thrust the sword into the Heart of your Mother. With your sufferings you must also atone for your sins and for the sins of others. Mary never sinned and yet She atoned. What should we do? We shun suffering. We rebel against God when He justly punishes us. We try to avoid the cross. If you looked at that pierced Heart your sufferings would vanish and you would realize how sweet it is to suffer for God in company with, and in imitation of, the Heart of Our Blessed Lady.

Never ask for your sufferings to be removed. Rather ask to be taught how to bear them, that you render them divine, noble, meritorious by sharing them with your sorrowful Mother.

MEDITATION 89

The Heart of Mary (7)

1. A Mother's Heart

Another symbol shown in the picture of the Most Pure Heart of Mary is fire. Her Heart is seen surrounded by flames, signifying that Her heart exists in an ardent atmosphere which breaks into flames of divine fire; a fire which consumes internally and appears externally as though wanting to set the whole world on fire.

That symbol surely depicts the burning love contained in the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It is the love of a mother. How great even the natural love of Mary must be! Is there anything more sublime than the heart of a mother? Where can we find a love which better deserves such a name? Where is there a love more similar to the love of God? As a man is, so is his heart. His love sums up and pictures the entire man. The heart of a mother sums

up all that is love on earth. A mother's heart is the masterpiece turned out by the hands of the Creator.

God Himself when picturing His love to mankind, when trying to make them know what His love is like, compares Himself to a mother. "For could a mother forget her child?" The heart of a mother is like a boundless ocean of love. Nothing can compare with it. That is why nature has given us many friends, many brothers and relations who no doubt love us tenderly but only one mother has been given to us. No other love for us ever equals Hers. If God has enclosed so many wonders in the heart of a mother, what must He have done in the heart of Mary? Is not She His own Mother? Yes, Mother of God and Mother of men. Can you, then, imagine what the heart of such a mother must be? Give some thought to the sweet consideration on the heart of the Mother of God, on the heart of the Mother of men.

2. The Heart of God's Mother

We are overtaken by awe when plunging into the depths of such a sublime mystery. Mary is Mother of God. Is there anything greater and more incomprehensible on the part of God than to have

wanted a woman as His own real mother? And it was Mary who was called to the high glory of becoming the Mother of God. This mystery contains infinite wonders. According to it, Mary gave earthly life to God. This is what is meant by "being a mother", to give life to another being. Mary gave human life to the Son of God Who consequently became Her Son.

St. Augustine pondering over this sweet reality exclaimed: *Christ's flesh, Mary's flesh*. And in fact, Her flesh, Her blood, Her life, Her heart were in truth the flesh, the blood, the life and the heart of God. Without the intervention of any other paternity, except that of God, the Son of God was exclusively Her Son. That is why Mary is more mother than any other mother. God and She: no one else had any share in this sublime maternity. No mother could exclaim more rightly than She when She pressed Her Son to Her bosom and said: "You are mine and wholly mine."

Jesus Christ was a real man. He had a body capable of suffering like ours, a human heart similar to ours, liable to be tenderly moved and feeling our miseries and sorrows as His own, and it was all thanks to Mary. "Mary", exclaims St. Augustine, "is

Mother of Jesus, Mother of God much more according to the spirit than according to the Flesh". We may say that Mary conceived also in Her heart.

What tender currents must have been established between the maternal Heart of Mary and the Heart of the Child God! Those realisations so surpass our understanding when we think of them that it looks to us that the very humanity of Mary vanishes into perfect fusion with divinity itself. It looks as though the infinite distance that separates God from creatures has all of a sudden been obliterated.

3. The Heart of the Mother of Men

With the truly divine love which She had for Her Son, Mary loves us also. It could not be otherwise. We are Her children. She is verily our Mother. How could it be otherwise? The heart of Mary was never, of course, separated in love from Her divine Son. He was the first object of Her love, He was Her first-born and in a proper and strict sense, He was Her only Son. But in Him and with Him we were in a certain and true sense also Her other children. Mary envisaged us in this manner as unfortunate children who from Adam had inherited death and

ruin, but who by the grace and mercy of God have been re-born in Christ, and through Christ have become children of Mary. What a Mother we have: what love towards us is contained in that maternal heart. No doubt that heart is devoured by the same love which enwraps the Heart of Jesus.

When She consented to that divine maternity proffered by the Angel of the Annunciation, with Her *Fiat,* Mary agreed to be the Mother of God and our Mother also. She knew it was God's will and She makes no distinction between the two maternities. She does not accept the first and reject the second. No, Her Heart will embrace both the sublime maternity of God and the sad, sorrowful, hard maternity of mankind.

Look at the Heart which decided on the incarnation of the Word and which decreed the salvation of man whose mother She was going to be. That decision sprang from Her loving Heart. There is yet another proof of Her motherly affection: She stands by the Cross and there She fulfils what She had promised, because there She is publicly and solemnly declared the Mother of mankind. But who could ever fathom the cost? Yet She so loves Her children that She does not hesitate in accepting any suffering or

sacrifice. The greatest love that a mother could nurture towards Her children is in the Heart of Mary. The greatest sacrifice that any mother made for Her children was consummated in that Heart.

4. Your Filial Heart

If you are to follow God's plans, if you are not to be a false note in the harmony of the divine work of redemption, you must have a filial heart towards the Mother whom God has assigned to you. It would be absurd to expect Our Lady to love us with the heart of a mother since such was the plan of God whilst dispensing ourselves from loving Her as dutiful children. It would be monstrous on our part not to love Her just because we are not prepared to meet the sacrifices it demands. If that were so, what name should we deserve? And yet this frightful supposition, monstrous though it be, is often a reality. Take a look into your heart and see whether it confirms this sad truth. A child who does not love his mother is to us something unnatural, abnormal and monstrous. Nor is it different in the case of Our Mother of Heaven.

Scrutinize your heart and see whether such monstrous ingratitude nestles there. See if in prac-

tice you are always ready for sacrifice or whether you have to regret, in the past, compromises made or cowardice or lack of generosity. Ask pardon from Her, brace yourself for the struggle. Draw closer to that fire, the heart of Your Mother. Warm yourself, burn up your self-love, your sensuality, your every passion which keeps you away from it. *Anyone who does not love Jesus Christ let him be accursed*, St. Paul exclaims. Something similar should be said about our love for Mary. The one who has no filial love for Mary, who disavows that sweet maternity of Our Heavenly Mother will be eternally accursed.



MEDITATION 90

The Heart of Mary (8)

1. The Crown of Flowers

When looking at the picture of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, you cannot help noticing a crown of flowers around it. You ask yourself what it stands for. You recall the crown of sharp thorns around the Sacred Heart of Jesus while here Mary has a crown of roses. There is actually no difference between these crowns. Both Hearts beat together. The feelings of the one find an echo in the other. Therefore the thorns in Jesus' Heart must also pierce the Heart of His Mother. The only difference is the symbolic meaning attached to the crowns. The crown of thorns stands for the ingratitude of men towards the Heart of Jesus whilst the crown of roses represents the charm and beauty of the virtues which rise in Our Lady's heart. Notice however, that while the crown of thorns is not without flowers neither are the roses without thorns.

All those saintly souls which undaunted by those sharp thorns have chosen to embrace the Heart of Jesus have invariably been surprised to realize that the thorns had lost their sharpness. Indeed, divine love had so transformed them that those thorns were changed into exquisite flowers of alluring scent. There is no doubt about it. Test and see. Give yourself up entirely to the love of God, try to enter His Divine Heart and, in spite of the Cross and thorns that surround it you will experience unsuspected sweetness and hitherto unknown happiness.

This is the hidden treasure — an infinite treasure which enriches souls and renders them happy — a treasure though which is hidden behind thorns and the Cross. Unfortunately, many souls grow frightened at what faces them, so that they never reach the point of savouring the sweet honey contained therein. That then is why the Heart of Our Lady is depicted by flowers. No one, as She did, embraced the thorns of the Heart of Her Son whereupon the thorns were immediately converted into charming roses of the most sublime virtue.

Embrace the thorns of the Heart of Christ and your heart forthwith will blossom into flowers. Look at the Heart of Mary and estimate how

many hidden thorns must be contained therein. How many sharp thorns must have penetrated that Heart before blossoming into those roses. And then look at the Heart of Jesus and judge how many of those thorns are due to your indifference, your lukewarmness, your blindness to His love. Not He but I should be pierced by those thorns.

Jesus has enough thorns; so collect some for yourself. Do it, and you will soon realize how your generosity will blossom forth like the Heart of Mary. All the saints thus acted. Remember St. Theresa of the Child Jesus: that little saint with a shower of roses. She was one of the lovers of the flowers of the Heart of Mary. But there is no account of the number of sufferings, of mortifications with which she paid for every rose of Mary's Heart. Ask Our Lady the grace of being as fond of the roses of the spirit as St. Theresa was.

2. The Virginal Lily

Amongst all the flowers which form the crown of the Heart of Mary there is one in the centre which looks higher and spreads over Her Heart. It is a snow-white lily; the symbolism is quite evident. If all the flowers of that crown represent the virtues of Our Mother, what is the meaning of that

ravishing lily which in the very centre of that Heart so vigorously shoots and blossoms forth? Christian people long ago gave the answer: They call the Heart of Mary Most Pure and Immaculate for immaculate purity is the characteristic trait of the Heart of Mary. So beautiful it is that the Church does not hesitate to apply to it the words which Holy Scripture applies to the Divine Wisdom: it is the *shining of the eternal light, the reflection of the beauty of God, the spotless mirror of His infinite sanctity.*

We could view Mary's purity in two ways; in a negative manner meaning thereby the absence of every sin, thus Mary shines without the smallest blemish, without the slightest shadow, without the tiniest imperfection, or in a positive manner.

Even the most saintly soul could not avoid some of those little miseries, children of our weakness. Nor does this lessen their sanctity, for these involuntary imperfections grow and die with human nature. But it was not so with the Heart of Our Heavenly Mother, where not even the slightest involuntary imperfection casually tarnished even for a moment that Heart. God protected Her from the enemy who could never score any triumph over Her. How beautifully clean, how shining, how spotless was Her Heart.

We must not stop here, but go deeper into that positive purity which does not consist in the mere absence of stains but rather in a positive sharing in the purity of God Himself. Absence of sin is an essential condition that God may be pleased with us. But what is really great, wonderful and divine is that the soul commune with Him, that God should give Himself up to it and render it a partaker, through grace, of His very life.

The real positive beauty of a soul, its true purity, consists in that sanctifying grace which floods it and makes it mirror God's image. Think what would be the pure beauty of that Virgin whose Heart was from the beginning possessed by God. Try to ponder the meaning of the words of the Angel: *the Lord is with thee*. God permanently dwells in the Heart of the Virgin and that is why this Heart is most pure and immaculate not only in a negative sense but also in a positive manner. It has no shadow, it has no stain, instead it contains the fullness of the grace of God. It enshrines in itself the purity of God Himself. It contains God.

But there is yet still more, much more. You should not imagine Mary's purity as a grace so granted by God that She behaves in a merely passive way: that

She was a kind of mirror, shining and clear, mechanically reflecting the rays which fall upon it. No! Mary would respond in Her most pure Heart to every ray of light, of grace, of sanctity which came from God with a renewed act of love of God in such a manner that Her Heart, so marvellously active, would through Her ever-growing love induce the Heart of God to shower new graces. You can then see how great was Mary's share in the acquisition and preservation of Her immaculate purity.

3. Your Own Crown

This is the crown for your heart: a crown of thorns through sacrifice, through the mortification of your passions, to help you keep away from all sin. In this manner you will acquire negative purity, the first rose which can be expected to blossom forth from those thorns. And God, seeing you so well disposed, receptive of His grace, will generously pour Himself out into your heart.

Countless virtues will flourish in your heart, thereby rendering it similar to that of Jesus in the thorns of loving sacrifice; similar to the Heart of Mary in the roses of Her virtues now duplicated in your own soul. Negative purity is essential.

Through it in imitation of Our Lady you will cast sin away from your heart. Then positive purity will fill your soul with the grace of the divine life; active purity will faithfully correspond to all graces.

Ask Your Beloved Mother most insistently to assist you, to make you similar to Her in all virtues, but chiefly in Her immaculate purity. Suggest to Her that you want a crown of virtues similar to Hers and tell Her that you want above all that lily which blooms in the centre of Her Immaculate Heart.



MEDITATION 91

The Heart of Mary (9)

1. Mercy

The sweetest attribute of God is Mercy. It is the attribute which draws our heart to Him most strongly and gives us courage and hope. If God was only an exacting judge, judging us only according to the standards of justice, who would not tremble in front of Him? But if He is above all a loving Father, with a heart full of compassion and mercy, who would not trust Him? One of the greatest proofs that this is so is precisely the most merciful Heart of Our Lady, for the merciful heart of Mary exemplifies the bounty and love of God towards men. We all need mercy so badly which is why we all wish the presence of this attribute in the hearts of Jesus and Mary to be emphasised. A compassionate heart which feels the needs, the sorrows and the miseries of its neighbour as its own,

a merciful heart which weeps with those that weep, which suffers with those that suffer is for everyone irresistibly attractive.

And if, in addition to feeling the miseries of its neighbours as its own, it still strives and works, sparing no sacrifice and privation, in order to bring a remedy to them, then we have the climax of bounty and mercy. Thus did the Heart of Mary raise mercy to a truly divine degree. Her Heart was adorned with all the characteristics of the most perfect and sublime mercy. Her Heart is also the most compassionate of hearts. Every misfortune or trial finds an echo in Her Heart. This was clearly shown at the wedding feast of Cana. The hearts of the newlyweds were not yet disturbed while Hers was already suffering. She anticipated their difficulty in order to remedy it. Even before the couple were aware of what was happening, the Heart of Mary was already finding a solution which they themselves would have never dared ask. Is this not a marvellous case of bounty? Does it not delightfully picture the compassion and mercy of Mary's Heart? How often has She not obtained from Jesus for us something which we badly needed and which we ourselves had not yet asked either be-

cause we did not know the danger, or perhaps because we were mean or indifferent.

2. A Mother's Mercy

The reason is that the mercy of Mary was the mercy of a mother, just as the Heart from which it sprung was a mother's heart. This explains the abundance of mercy and bounty. A child might be a wretch, he might be plagued with physical and moral disease; he might be an outcast, an object of revulsion; he might inspire you with disgust and repugnance. But the more miseries and wretchedness she finds in it the more the heart of its mother will pant for it with renewed and greater love. The heart of a mother never despairs, never grows tired, always hopes, always waits, tries to come to the rescue of her child. And it is not a mere blindness that drives her. It is that she has an inkling, an intuition of heart that sees beyond the eyes of others. For Her there are no irreparable losses and miseries to be seen: the heart of a mother still finds indications and clues. She discovers sentiments that could raise and dignify the heart of her wretched child even now. A mother by the power of her tenderness, by the goodness of her heart, will still be able to rekindle

long spent sentiments, to revive a heart long believed dead; to resuscitate a conscience long hardened by sin and passion. Ask St. Augustine. Let him tell you what is the power of a compassionate heart, of a pious, merciful heart of a mother. And now go to the Heart of Our Lady who is more of a mother than any other mother, with a heart that is the sum total in bounty and mercy of all that God poured into all the hearts of all the mothers of the world.

On the other hand Her compassion is not just a barren feeling as often is that of many mothers who would, but cannot, come to the rescue of their child. Mary wields the omnipotence of God Himself, and She uses it generously to help Her children. Did She not do so at the wedding of Cana when compelling Jesus to anticipate His first miracle? Did She not do so with the apostles in those days of desolation and dismay? Forgetting Herself She was their only hope and strength and consolation; and the apostles, supported by the efficacious goodness of that Mother, gathered around Her.

And amongst all, was not Peter the one who most experienced the mercy of Her sweet Heart? It was doubtless She who ran to Peter when he, full of sorrow for his three-fold denial, left the house of

the High Priest. It was at the feet of Mary that Peter shed his first tears for his sin. There he made the first confession of his cowardly apostasy. Great was his fortune on meeting the Heart of Our Heavenly Mother. What would have happened to him without this Heart? He might perhaps have become a Judas since he equally had motives for despair. Yet at the feet of Mary, close to Her Heart, despair was impossible, discouragement was not possible either. Peter rose to his feet certain of having been pardoned and thus it was that he did not despair like Judas, nor did he flee like Adam after his sin but remained there waiting, expecting the resurrection of Jesus with a heart overflowing with confidence that had been instilled into him by our Blessed Lady. A mother's mercy indeed.

3. The Heavenly Mother

The marvellous point about this maternal mercy of the Virgin is that it did not, as is the case with earthly mothers, come to an end at death. She is now in Heaven and in spite of Her elevation to a throne so near to God Her Heart keeps always the same, though in Heaven there are no tears to wipe away nor miseries nor sufferings of any sort. Yet She has

not forgotten Her wretched children. If there has been any change in the Heart of Mary, it is that now from Heaven the Heart of Mary, Empress, is more compassionate, more clement, more merciful, and in a better position to help Her wretched children down below.

In Heaven Her mercy is most active. She works incessantly for souls. Sometimes by interceding for us, at other times by showering with full hands torrents of graces into our hearts. The most unfortunate, the most wretched, the greatest sinners are the chief object of Her intercession. She witnesses from Heaven the wild attacks directed by the devil against souls and then She infuses courage and grants graces that ensure victory.

Particularly She will come to the rescue with Her merciful Heart in that final battle of our life and will lead to victory the souls of those that love Her. How many times have the angels of Heaven been the messengers of peace, of consolation and of hope, sent by Her to those who invoked Her in the battle!

Ask your guardian angel whence come so many inspirations, so many knocks at the door of your heart, so many helps, and he will tell you that it is His Mistress and Queen who commands him, who

gives him no rest, but rather urges him to toil more and more to protect your soul.

4. Confidence and Love

At this point you should be burning with great love towards Our Heavenly Mother. You should plunge with boundless confidence into Her motherly heart. Consideration of this merciful Heart cannot possibly lead us to take advantage of Her bounty so as to feel safe in our sins. No, that would be monstrous! But you must not through discouragement, mistrust and fear allow the devil to deceive you. No matter what your behaviour was in the past, no matter how great your abuse of the graces that God granted you, no matter how often you have fallen, and gone back on your word, nevertheless you should fall at the feet of Mary, for in front of Her no fear or mistrust can be justified. It was for this reason that God granted Her that Heart.

Our Lord said that He did not want the death of the sinner, and the Heart of Mary keeps on repeating these very same words to you. Trust in the goodness of Your Mother. Love this bounteous Heart. Let nothing take from you this most sweet hope and trust in Her: O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary!

MEDITATION 92

Mother Omnipotent

1. All-powerful

This title must oftimes have been on your lips. Your heart must oftimes have uttered this invocation: *Oh Heavenly Mother, Mother Omnipotent*. A title which should ever strengthen your trust in Our Lady. Our Lady is the all-powerful Queen who wields on behalf of Her children all power.

Mary is practically omnipotent, not with a natural or essential omnipotence for such belongs only to God, but by communication. She is practically omnipotent not by nature but by grace Mary has been raised to the highest dignity. And since power is in proportion to dignity, Mary's dignity warrants the highest power. Her power derives from Her dignity. She is the Mother of God. She forever can address to Jesus the very same words uttered by the Eternal Father: *Thou art my Son, I have begotten Thee*.

Consequently, Mary as Mother has rights over, and a love for, the Son of God. As a consequence the power of God is subjected and chained to the will of Mary. Just as in the House of Nazareth for about thirty years.

And why should there be a total and perfect submission of Jesus to the Virgin Mother? The love that Her divine child bore for Her compelled Him to the necessity of complying with whatever She wished. And although His actions as Redeemer were in no way dependent upon Her, yet He willed that also in this respect His will should be submitted to Her, as is shown in the first miracle of Cana. It is a consoling thought to know that the power of God lies in the hands of His Mother who happens to be your Mother also.

The Holy Fathers of the Church have said admirable things about this all-powerfulness of Mary: "O Virgin, all that God can do through His omnipotence you can also do through your prayer."

St. Antoninus said that the prayer of the Mother of God is for all practical purposes a command. It cannot but be heard.

St. Peter Damian writes: "Oh Mary, when you approach the Golden Altar of pardon, it isn't to

beseech but as a queen to command, since all the treasures of God's mercy lie in your hands."

St. Bonaventure goes so far as to say: "No one enters Heaven except through Mary."

Great St. Bernard advises us: "Have recourse to Mary. I tell you without hesitation She is always heard on account of Her dignity. The Angel told Her that She had found grace and in fact Mary always finds grace."

Finally, these words of St. Bernardine de Sienna are very well known: "The command of Mary is obeyed by the whole world even by God Himself. Let Mary will anything, and it will be done." God's submission and obedience to Her, a creature, is really sublime but not less sublime is Her dignity being placed in such heights that She can issue orders in Heaven.

The rights and the love of a mother: these are the foundations of Her omnipotence. A mother has the right to issue orders to her son. The son has the duty to obey her. A mother tenderly loves her son. A good son cannot but love his mother and consequently, be always ready to please her in everything. Just apply this simple rule to Mary and Her divine child to see why Our Lady must be practically all-powerful.

2. The Universal Power

This all-powerfulness is not limited to one place, or one time, or to some privileged class of souls, to one particular order of graces and helps, or to one special kind of petition or prayer. Nothing of the kind. It is universal. It has no limits of any sort. We are all children of Mary. She will help us all. She will love us all without exception. All, and in all, both spiritually and temporally. No need is beyond Her power. No benefaction exhausts Her hands. Nor can time weaken the efficacy of Her graces. If Mary made saints of other souls, if others were raised to the life of grace, if others were helped in diverse manners, all this can happen to you. Your soul can also achieve pardon, grace, life, sanctity.

Since the first sin was committed, the devil became a universal, an all-world power, subjecting all souls, the whole world over, to temptation. He enkindles the passions in them in order to enchain souls. How frightful is this dominion of the devil and how universal. Who has not experienced it? Only Our Lady, by Her most pure Conception, escaped this captivity. In fact She binds him, subdues him, masters him. She pursues him everywhere and combats and conquers him always. The do-

minion of the devil is universal but so likewise is the all-powerfulness of Mary. Her triumph will be universal and eternal. But Her victory is not Hers alone. It is also ours. No one has recourse to Her and has trust in Her in vain. All the saints, all those who withstand the devil, do so because of Mary. Without Mary their efforts would have been futile. That is why many holy doctors apply to Mary those words of the psalmist: *Unless God build His house, in vain do toil those who build it. Unless God keep a watch over the city, in vain do watchmen guard it*. And who is the guard and the defence of the house of the Lord if not Our Lady? The Lord guards His city but He does so through Mary knowing then that it is well defended. One who takes shelter under Her protecting mantle will never fear.

You ought to know it well for you must have experienced it yourself. Is not your soul one more witness to those words of the *Memorare: No one who ever had recourse to Her was left unaided*. Satan knows it well. How many times has he been bound to confess with infernal rage that he could do nothing against the devotees of Our Lady? The piety of all founders has acknowledged the universality of Her power and called Her "The Gate of Heaven", “the

Ladder of Paradise", “the Refuge of sinners”, “the Throne of the Eternal King”, “the Hall of propitiation” where all of us are heard and helped.

You should keep on repeating deliberately and affectionately all those many expressions which refer to the consoling universality of Mary's power: Mary is “the hope of sinners”, “the path to life”, “the harbour of safety”, “the salvation of mankind”, “the spring — source of grace”, “the star of the sea”, “the Mediatrix between God and men”, “the key of Heaven”, “the hope of the fallen”, “the strength of the just”, “the joy of the Angels”, “the Queen of the centuries”. Your heart could also find many similar expressions which you could weave into an ardent, loving litany to your Mother.

3. Let Us Thank God for It

Having reached this point, let us raise our hearts to God in thanksgiving. The priest at Holy Mass daily renders thanks to God in a loud voice and invites the congregation to do likewise for the innumerable benefits that His divine hand constantly showers upon us. What else can we do in face of the numberless benefits He and His Beloved Mother have bestowed on us? We ought to give continuous thanksgiving.

Let us start right now. And this thanksgiving of ours should not consist merely of words. God expects the most beautiful hymn of gratitude, a practical correspondence in behaviour. Your gratitude should lead to the strengthening of your trust in Our Heavenly Mother, a trust that admits no fatigue, discouragement or cowardly disappointment.

Be strong on this point because the devil will be ever seeking to tempt. How many souls he has deceived even to despair! So now to Our Lady's Feet. She is your Mother given you by God and so, no matter how ungrateful have you been in the past, you can always have recourse to Her. With filial right you can demand from Her a motherly love, a motherly compassion and at the same time a Queenly omnipotence. She is both Empress and Mother.

Justice and bounty surround the throne of God. Goodness and mercy the throne of Mary. If rightly you feel impressed by the justice of God you cannot be frightened before the throne of Our Lady. She is ever expecting your return. And far from being offended by confidence, lack of confidence on the contrary offends both Jesus and Mary. Have you not heard from the lips of Our Lord that there is greater happiness in Heaven, for a sinner who repents

than for the hundred just who persevere? And in Heaven, the first to rejoice is Our Blessed Lady. She will make a feast at the return of Her prodigal son who had gone away but was eventually found; who was dead but is now alive.

Let, then, your motto be: never lose heart; never grow downhearted, never be discouraged. Even if you see you are making no headway, achieving nothing, keep on trusting in Our Blessed Lady and go on working every day with more enthusiasm.



MEDITATION 93

Sanctity

1. The Holy Will of God

We are reaching the end of our Marian Meditations whose chief aim should be to spur us on to labour for our sanctification. This is the will of God, says St. Paul, that you should become saints. This was God's Holy Will about Our Blessed Lady as it is also in regard to ourselves. Let, then, this meditation on sanctity be the crowning of all the other meditations.

The virtues of Our Holy Mother form Her glorious crown. She is our perfect model, our peerless teacher. Let us see Her also as our model in sanctity. The sanctity of Mary is a pleasant yet difficult subject to delve into. In order to deal with it all exhaustively we should have a perfect knowledge of it. But this is possible only to God. Yet we must meditate on the sanctity of the most holy soul of Mary so that

we may follow Her at close range. This is, indeed, the Holy Will of God "that we must become saints".

Consequently, sanctity is a duty which we must fulfil. It is not just simple advice. All of us wish to save ourselves. But do we equally want to be saints? And yet both things are inseparable. Only the one who ensures the life of grace in his soul will save himself. But this is precisely sanctity. Grace is sanctity. Naturally there are many different degrees in it but without grace there is no entering Heaven and without sanctity nobody can be saved.

We must, then, strive after sanctity in order to save ourselves. To aim at salvation and to consider sanctity as an exclusive privilege of some chosen few would be a fatal mistake. All are invited to the higher degree of perfection. To this climbing there is no limit.

Sanctity, which pre-supposes the grace of God, is God's greatest achievement, the most divine of His works. But it is also the masterpiece of man: he could do nothing greater. The most important thing man can do is to work at this enterprise. Could we see a soul in the state of grace, in the state of sanctity, we would see God Himself in it, since its beauty is the beauty of God. The greater the sanctity in

a soul, the more intimate is also its union with God, its share of the divine perfections.

2. The Will of God in Mary

God's Will in regard to Mary was that She should be the sum total, the model and spring of all sanctity. At the very first instant of Her conception Mary was inundated by sanctifying grace and became conscious of Her actions, enjoying a full knowledge and a full mastery of Herself whereby She threw Herself with all Her might towards the Heart of God. Watch this marvellous sight which had never happened before nor will ever happen again. God floods the soul of Mary with the torrent of His love and of His life, and Mary, making use of all the graces She received, without neglecting a single one, directs Her life of grace and gratitude towards God.

In Mary the reaction was equal to the action. Much had She received; all of which She gave back. The first action of God upon the soul of Mary, an action that was powerful, bounteous and loving, was to fill Her soul to its full capacity with sanctifying grace. But to that divine action, infinitely loving and bounteous, Mary offered so to speak, Her reaction,

by giving Herself infinitely loving up to God without limitation and with all the strength of Her being.

This sanctifying grace of God kept on increasing and developed prodigiously in the immaculate soul of Mary. Her correspondence to grace kept on inviting His love and grace. How far did that sanctity grow? God only has the answer, since God alone knows how far His action went and how far Her reaction reached.

Bear in mind that there is a real sanctity and there is a *moral sanctity*. The real sanctity is the sanctity of those things dedicated or consecrated to God. Such is the sanctity of a temple where God especially dwells. Such is the sanctity of the sacred vessels and of the objects dedicated to divine worship. We may take as an example of real sanctity in man the sanctity of the newly baptized child in whose soul the life of grace abides. We have an example of moral sanctity in the acts of virtue through which the soul freely and voluntarily corresponds to the grace of God and gives itself entirely to His divine love.

Mary is most holy both with a real and with a moral sanctity. Through real sanctity Her soul is in a close union with the Holy Trinity. St. Thomas says that this union is the closest and strongest that can

exist between a creature and the Creator, and therefore the real sanctity of Mary is the greatest possible. To this boundless real sanctity of Mary equally great moral sanctity corresponds. She profited by all the graces sent by God without ever wasting a single one so that it may be said of Mary much more rightly than of St. Paul: *The grace of God was not in vain or useless in Her*. In one word, through this moral sanctity of Our Heavenly Mother, Her correspondence to the divine favours was exactly just what it ought to be, just what God wanted and expected, namely, most perfect in every way. Here you have a measuring rod to gauge the sanctity of Our Lady. You may well understand why it is said that sanctity consists in love, since love is the melting of two hearts into one, is the transformation of one into the other. In real sanctity, God loves His creature and out of this love gives it through grace a share in His own divine life. Then the soul by giving itself up to God and by loving Him transforms itself into Him and corresponds to His grace and love.

In sanctity, therefore, there must be this love of two hearts. There must be these two elements: the heart of God and the heart of man. Sanctity is, consequently, the sanctity of God plus the sanctity of man. Apply all this to Mary. Deduce how much

God loves Her and how much She loves God. All Her life was one single flame of love. Love prompted, propelled all Her actions. The intensity of Her love was the perfection of Her sanctity.

3. Your Sanctity

Now you should focus on the problem of your own sanctity. You might not have taken it to heart as if it were not the will of God in your regard also. Imprint this truth on your mind: God most earnestly wants your sanctification. But do you also want it? Theoretically, perhaps, you may have repeated many times "Yes"; but when will you utter your decision in a denite manner? God wants it and shows it very clearly through the graces He pours on you.

He shows it by the real sanctity that He has conferred on you, since your soul has been sanctified by the infusion of sanctifying grace in Baptism, in the sacrament of Penance and in Holy Communion where He gives Himself to you totally. And did you really decide to sanctify yourself? Do you show it through the moral sanctity of your heart, your actions, your correspondence to the divine love?

You have seen Our Lady, as a model of all virtues. You might have been able to imitate some of them

in order to have some resemblance to Your Mother. See Her now crowned with the divine halo of sanctity. She is your model, not in the extraordinary grace that God granted Her but in Her own sanctity, achieved through Her correspondence to grace. God has gathered in Her all that He scattered on the other saints. Pray to Mary to have a share also. If you know how to study and copy Mary, how to have recourse to Her, to love Her and be faithful and constant in this love with Her and through Her you will certainly save your soul and become a saint.



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